Better Homes & Gardens®

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LIFE in Bloom

Inspiring gardens, charming tables & nostalgic desserts to fuel your spring dreams

+

PRESSED-FLOWER EASTER EGGS *p. 28*

NEW WAYS WITH RANCH *p. 32*

2025 CLEAN HOUSE AWARDS *p. 54*

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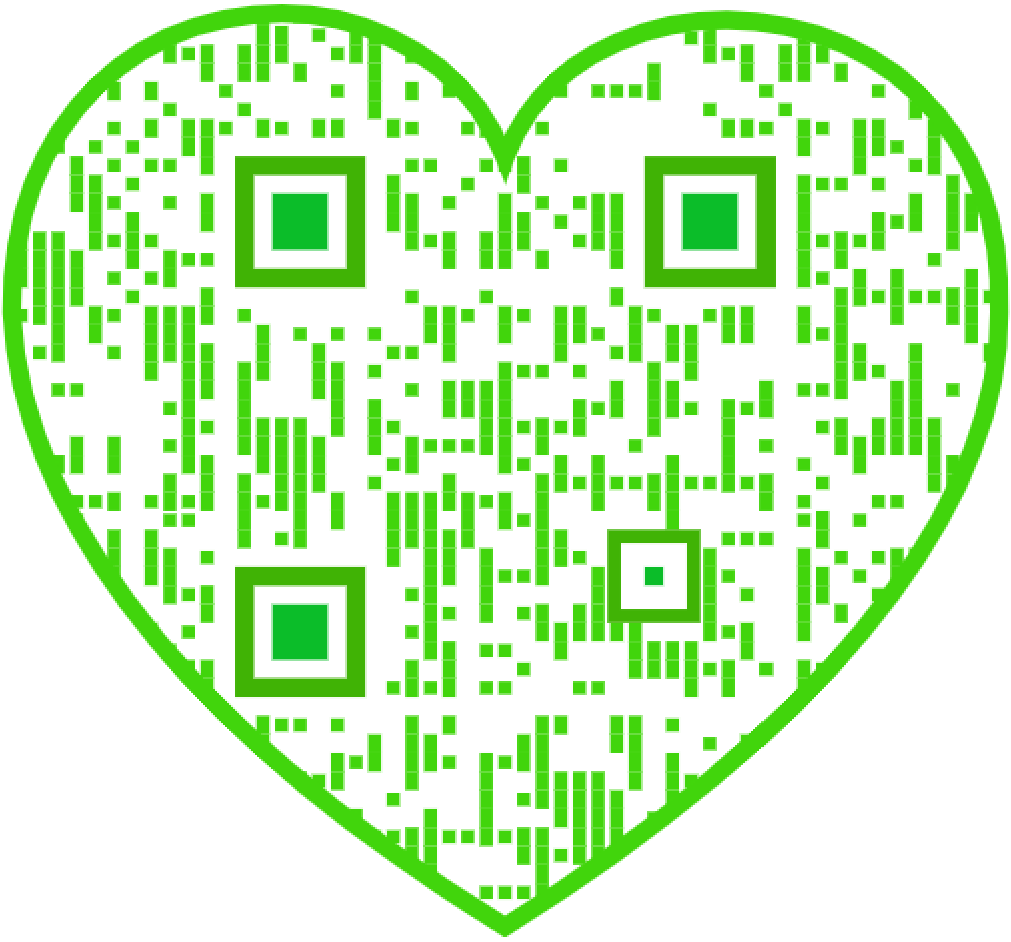

Charleston's Blooming Charms

A BOTANICAL RETREAT Charleston area hotels embrace the Lowcountry's natural beauty with lush gardens and serene courtyards. ***The Loutrel*** offers rooftop views amid vibrant greenery, while ***The Mills House*** charms with blooming spaces and an iconic fountain. ***The Ryder*** brings laid-back coastal vibes with its poolside oasis, and ***Zero George*** provides a tranquil escape in fragrant gardens and sun-dappled piazzas.

FLAVORFUL DINING DESTINATIONS Charleston's dining scene blends culinary excellence with natural beauty. ***Middleton Place Restaurant*** offers farm-to-table Lowcountry cuisine with views of verdant gardens and moss-draped oaks. ***82 Queen*** serves Southern classics in a flower-filled courtyard, while ***The Rooftop at Vendue*** pairs creative cocktails with skyline views and efflorescent planters. At ***167 Raw***, fresh seafood is enjoyed in a charming, garden-inspired setting. Savor Charleston's flavors surrounded by its signature springtime splendor.

SCAN FOR YOUR
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GARDENS GALORE Charleston's rich history comes to life through its stunning estates and landscapes. ***Magnolia Plantation & Gardens***, dazzles with vibrant azaleas and romantic pathways. ***Drayton Hall*** preserves its natural beauty with centuries-old live oaks and native flora. At the ***Charleston Tea Garden***, explore the only tea farm in North America, where rows of Camellia Sinensis thrive. ***The Nathaniel Russell House*** showcases an elegant formal garden, perfectly complementing its historic architecture.

History Loves Company

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If you're wanting to sell your **home** for top dollar, it pays **to h**ave a real estate agent with exceptional taste on your side—someone that **can** do all the little things **needed to make y**our house sparkle from **the street and catc**h a buyer's eyes. Homes with curb appeal can add 7% to a home's selling price, according to a study done by the University of Texas at Arlington[*], so having a creative and visionary agent can be very lucrative to a home seller.

Conversely, if you're in the market to buy a home, having an agent that can recognize a home's upgrade potential can also be immensely valuable.

At Better Homes and Gardens® Real Estate, the expertise of our affiliated agents is unmatched. While our agents have access to the best-in-class tech tools, housing data, and special renovation and staging programs with no upfront costs to sellers[**]—what truly separates them is their eye for beauty and their ability to make magic happen. Our affiliated agents are the only agents in the world that can be trained through the Better Homes and Gardens Trend Maker designation course. This program keeps our agents up to date with the latest home trends so they can help make your home glimmer like the beautiful homes seen in this very magazine.

To find an agent and to learn why we have a staggering customer satisfaction rating of 99%[***], please visit us at BHGRE.com. In the meantime, have a look at the right side of the page and see how we can make a home irresistibly appealing using creativity and a few inexpensive touches.

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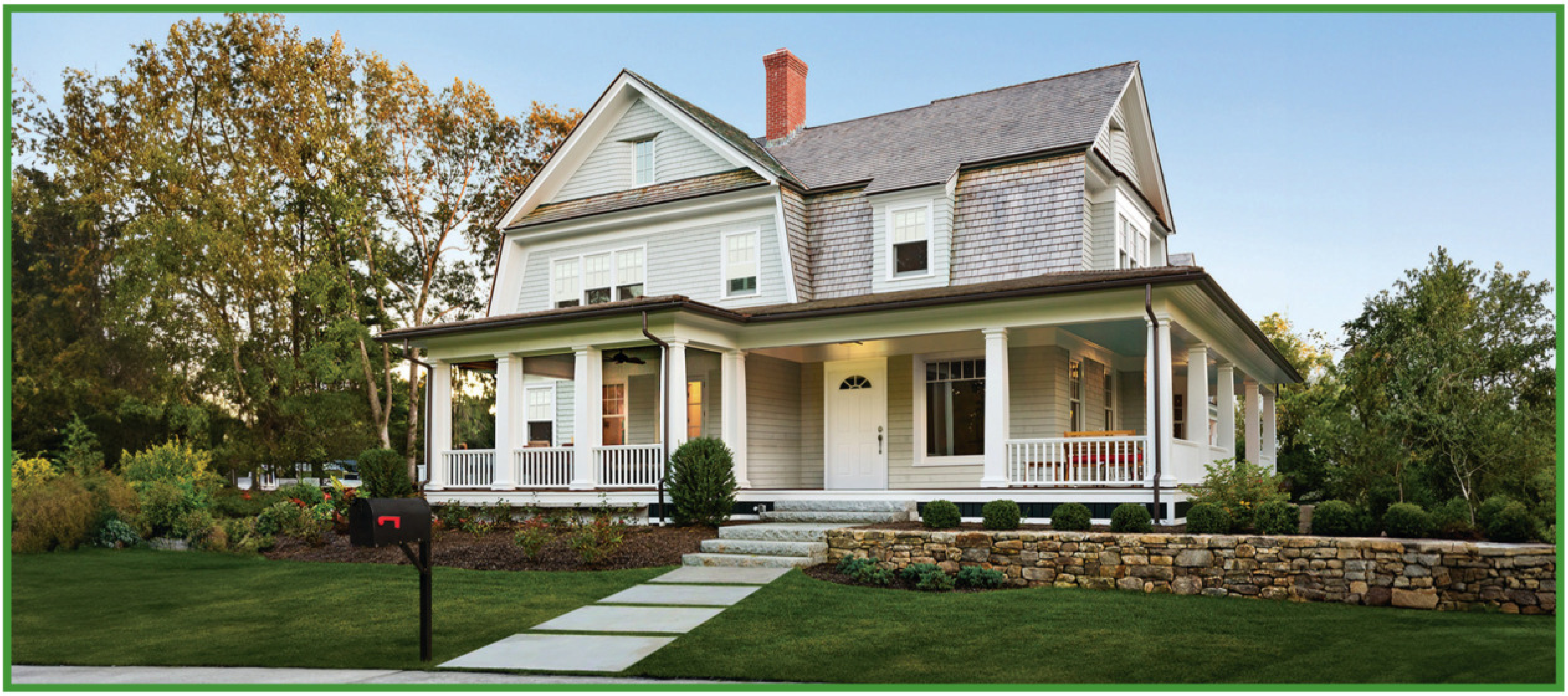

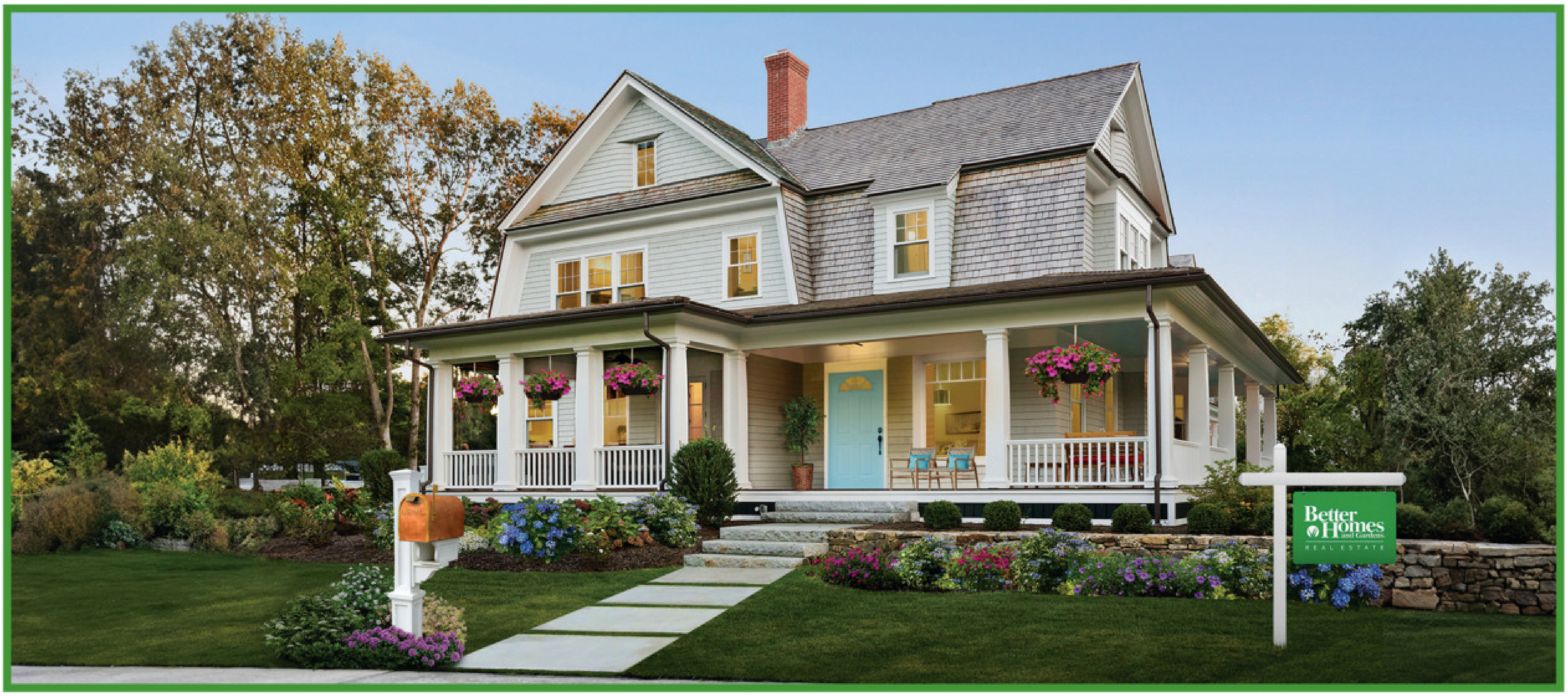

Can you spot the six differences between these two photos?

① In the lower photo, the second-story window blinds have been uniformly raised, and lights have been turned on, making the home inviting. ② Hanging flower baskets and a potted plant now accentuate the porch, while flowers in the yard combine to make the house alive with color. ③ Come sit a spell. Chairs with accent pillows give the home a comforting yet stately vibe. ④ A freshly painted front door provides the perfect pop of color and gives visitors a bright and uplifting welcome. ⑤ A stylish new copper mailbox compliments the home's copper gutters and fixtures. ⑥ A Better Homes & Gardens® Real Estate yard sign is now in the front yard, conveying the signature of a home properly represented.

*Valuing Curb Appeal (2019). **For the RealVitalize program, seller must pay for work upon earlier of closing, listing no longer being in effect, or 12 months after completion of first job. If settlement proceeds are insufficient to cover the RealVitalize project costs, seller must pay the balance within 15 days after closing. ***Based on BHGRE customer survey results from 01/01/24-12/31/24. ©2025 Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate LLC. All rights reserved. Better Homes and Gardens®, BHGRE®, the Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Logo and Expect Better are registered service marks owned by Meredith Operations Corporation and licensed to Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate LLC. Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate LLC fully supports the principles of the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Opportunity Act. Each franchise is independently owned and operated

april

APRIL 2025 • VOLUME 103 • NUMBER 4

66 *Every corner of this cottage-style garden is enchanting, including the chicken coop.*

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PHOTO: LAURIE BLACK

ON THE COVER *photo* CARSON DOWNING *produced by* JARRET EINCK

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Dirt, grass, and leaves have a tendency to find their way inside as people come and go via the mudroom. Your best bet is to sweep them right back outside with a broom. Store one with the **Command™ Broom Gripper** and use the same broom to brush away snow during cold-weather months.

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PHOTOS: (BUTTERFLY) THAWATS/GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO, (CRABAPPLES, DESSERT) CARSON DOWNING, (GLASSES) BRIE GOLDMAN, (ROOM) NOAH WEBB. FOR SERVICE ON YOUR SUBSCRIPTION, INCLUDING CHANGE OF ADDRESS, WRITE TO: BETTER HOMES & GARDENS CUSTOMER SERVICE, P.O. BOX 37449, BOONE, IA 50037-0449. PLEASE ENCLOSE YOUR ADDRESS LABEL FROM A RECENT ISSUE. OR VISIT US AT *BHG.COM/MYACCOUNT.*

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BAKING memories

WE HAVE A TRADITION in my house: When it's your birthday, you get to pick whatever celebratory dessert you want, and I will make it for you.

Over the years, there has been carrot cake, coconut cake with lemon curd filling, s'mores cake, strawberry layer cake, apple pie, coconut cream pie, banana cream pie, chocolate cake with raspberry filling. One year, there was a request for a "sock" cake, which, after much confused discussion with my then-3-year-old son, turned out to be a regular chocolate cake decorated with piped icing in the shape of a standard white tube sock.

Another year my husband wanted a very particular dessert that was a bit harder to accommodate. His grandmother used to make a chocolate chiffon pie that was his favorite but that no one had been able to replicate after she was gone. At the time, I'd never made a chocolate chiffon pie—I like chocolate, but I'd be more apt to go for the aforementioned coconut or banana cream pie. So I started madly googling, and based on the bread crumbs of his memory, I stumbled on a blog post about a vintage 1950s recipe originally published in none other than *Better Homes & Gardens* magazine.

I grilled my husband on the specifics of the pie he remembered. I pored over the details of the recipe. And that year, the high I get from doing this sweet thing for the people I love was particularly high, amplified by the nostalgia that was baked into that dessert for my husband.

Scent is the stronger sense tied to memory, but taste gets into the act as well—just think of French writer Marcel Proust and his madeleines. Those transportive memories evoked by taste and scent—known as Proust memories or the Proust effect—are powerful, and some research suggests they have real positive psychological benefits for those experiencing them.

With or without that research, we know that our favorite dishes, both new and old, certainly can make us happy. That's why we dug through our archives to bring back a delicious collection of vintage desserts that we think are much too good to be forgotten *(page 84)*. And, of course, that chocolate chiffon pie from the '50s is among them.

May all your spring celebrations be extra sweet,

Oma

OMA BLAISE FORD,
Senior Executive Editor

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WE'RE LOVING...

"Who knew the flavors of ranch dressing pair so perfectly with tonic? Our Ranch G&T *(page 37)* is about to become my new signature cocktail."
—ERIN HOOKER,
assistant food editor

"I love everything about Tracie Fish's cottagey garden *(page 66)*. I wish I could get my climbing roses to look like the ones on her arch."
—JENNIFER MADARA,
creative director

"The new outdoor tabletop collections from our Better Homes & Gardens line at Walmart are so good. I especially love the floral melamine dinnerware *(page 16)*—I want the entire set!"
—LAUREN BENGTSON,
senior market editor

PHOTO: CARSON DOWNING; HAIR STYLIST: BAILEY STONE; MAKEUP: IVY BOYD; ILLUSTRATIONS: (HOOKER, MADARA) LAMONT O'NEAL, (BENGTSON) JESSICA DURRANT

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Blades of Glory

For National Lawn Care Month, help your yard become its best, greenest self with top tips from the experts.

1

LAWN HEIGHT MATTERS

Several factors determine how long your grass should be before you mow. Learn the optimal height and mower settings for the healthiest lawn. *BHG.com/GrassHeight*

2

RAINY DAY DOS AND DON'TS

Spring showers are good for greener grass—but not your mower. Learn the most common mowing mistakes you can make with wet grass. *BHG.com/RainyLawn*

3

MIND THE WEEDS

Prevent annoying plants from wreaking havoc with our guide to identifying and getting rid of common weeds. *BHG.com/WeedControl*

Make-Ahead Easter Feast

We scoured our Test Kitchen's favorite holiday recipes and crafted an irresistible Easter menu to fit your busy schedule. Scan the QR code to find classic springtime dishes (many with a twist!), including Stuffed Spiral Ham, Loaded Baked Potato Salad, and our best-loved Carrot Cake. All of them have make-ahead instructions to help you plan the meal with ease.

Scan the code for the full menu.

Sweepstakes Kitchen Revamp

Win $25,000 to build the cooking space of your dreams. Enter at **BHG.com/25kKitchen** for a chance to win. For details, see *page 96*.

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RECOMMENDS

Best Hedge Trimmers

A cordless hedge trimmer is a life- and back-saver worthy of adding to your shed. If you're in the market to buy one, check out our testers' picks for portability, size, and value. *BHG.com/HedgeTrimmers*

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PHOTOS: (CARROTS) BLAINE MOATS, (TRIMMER) LAURA MILLER

m&m's
endless ways to easter
milk chocolate
m&m's
chocolate candies
pastel blend
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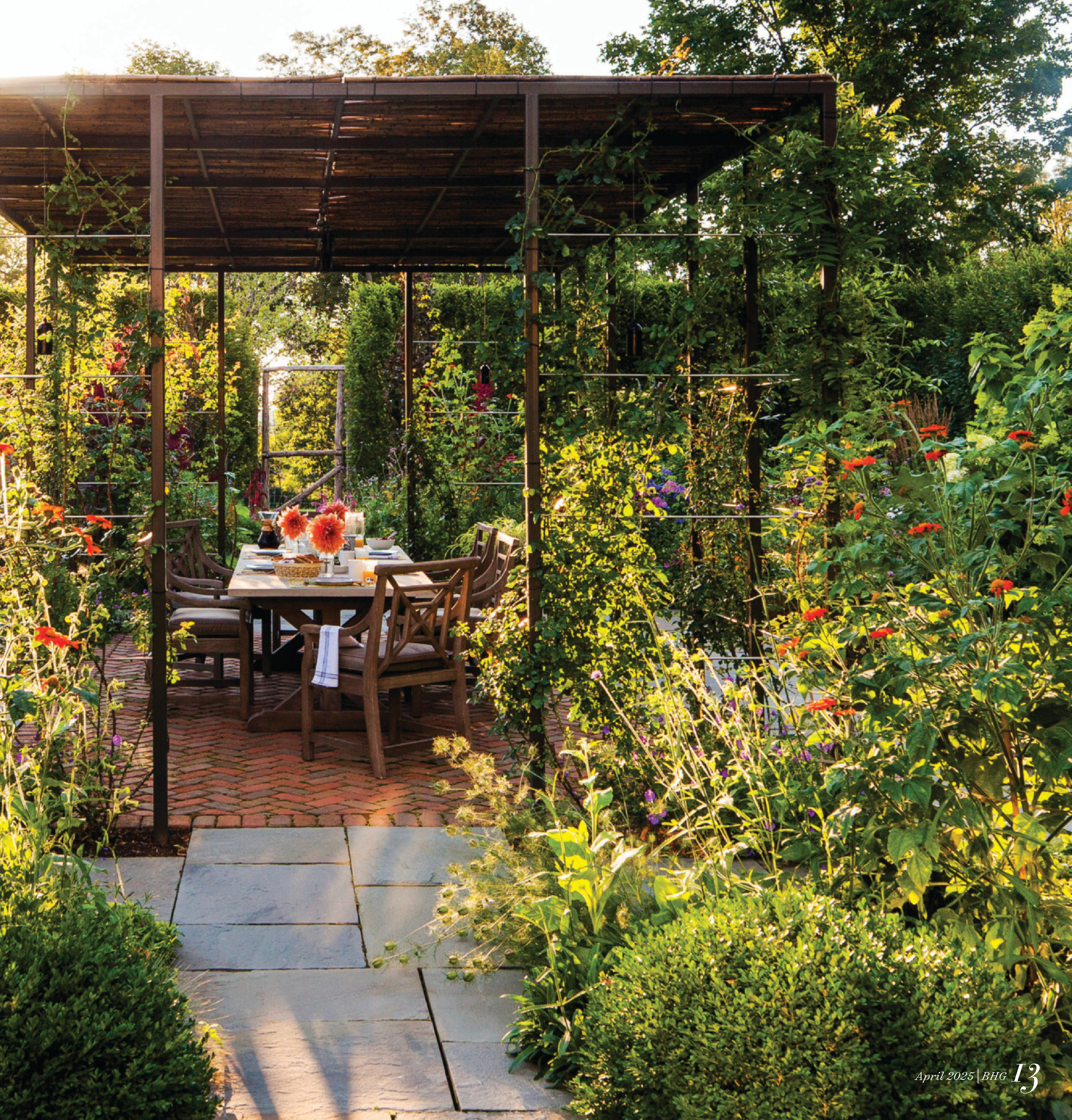
Sitting PRETTY

We're enchanted by this *pergola-topped oasis* tucked within a whimsical garden, with its wildly clambering flowers and joyful chaos all around.

by JOHANNA SILVER *photos* ERIC PIASECKI



In her 70x40-foot Millbrook, NY, garden, interior designer Katie Ridder created an outdoor room where abundance is everything. "I didn't want a clipped, manicured, expected garden I'd have to stake within an inch of its life. I wanted a wild, blousy garden," she says. The ultraminimalist design of the pergola makes it almost disappear within the enveloping growth.

The Dream List

Towering plants create a natural screen around the pergola, designed by Ridder's husband, architect Peter Pennoyer.

1 *KEEP IT SIMPLE*

While a pergola could be the star of the show, here it serves as the foil for the riot of garden surrounding it. The structure's clean lines and understated design balance out the unruliness of the plantings.

2 *LET LOOSE*

Ridder shows no restraint in the garden. "I want the pathways to get narrower and narrower as the season goes on," she says. She achieves density by overplanting, mixing perennials like heuchera and baptisia with annuals like poppies and zinnias, and including towering plants like amaranth and tithonia for an enveloping feel.

3 *SEEK BALANCE*

In addition to the pergola, the surrounding hornbeam hedge (which hides a deer fence) defines the outdoor room and adds a sense of order that balances the wildness of the garden. Boxwoods placed in corners anchor the planting beds and give the garden year-round structure.

4 *GO HIGH*

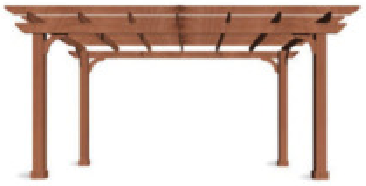
Ridder makes full use of vertical space with metal wire on the pergola acting as a trellis for climbing roses, clematis, sweet pea, morning glory, and white wisteria. "They're all mixed together," she says, noting that even "clematis skeletons become trellising for sweet peas."

shopping

Under Cover

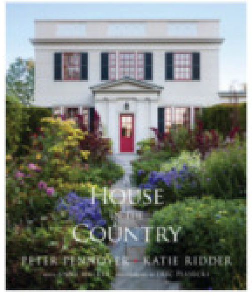
A pergola instantly gives an outdoor seating area a roomlike feel. Consider these styles and materials.

MODERN METAL
Brown Metal Freestanding Pergola with Canopy (10'x7'x10'), $369; *lowes.com*



CLASSIC WOOD
Veikous Cedar Wood Pergola with Flat Roof (10'x7.7'x12'), $600; *walmart.com*

TRAD GOES VINYL
Regency White Vinyl Flat-Top Pergola with Trellis (12'x9'x12'), $1,202; *homedepot.com*



A HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY
Dive deeper in Ridder and Pennoyer's book, which includes a detailed pullout plan of the garden. $55; *amazon.com* ■

IMAGES FROM *A HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY* BY PETER PENNOYER AND KATIE RIDDER; PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC PIASECKI; PUBLISHED BY THE VENDOME PRESS.

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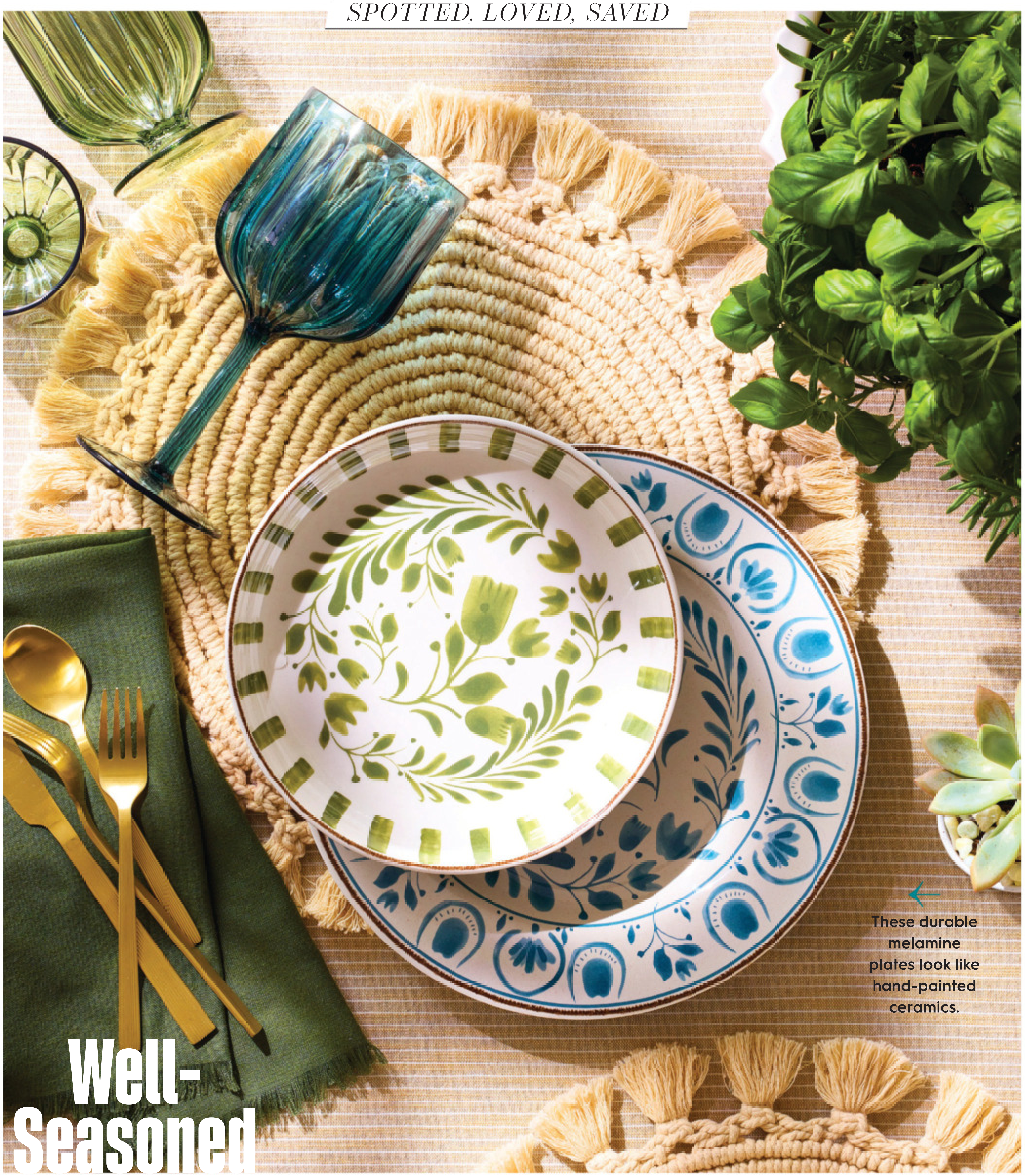


These durable melamine plates look like hand-painted ceramics.

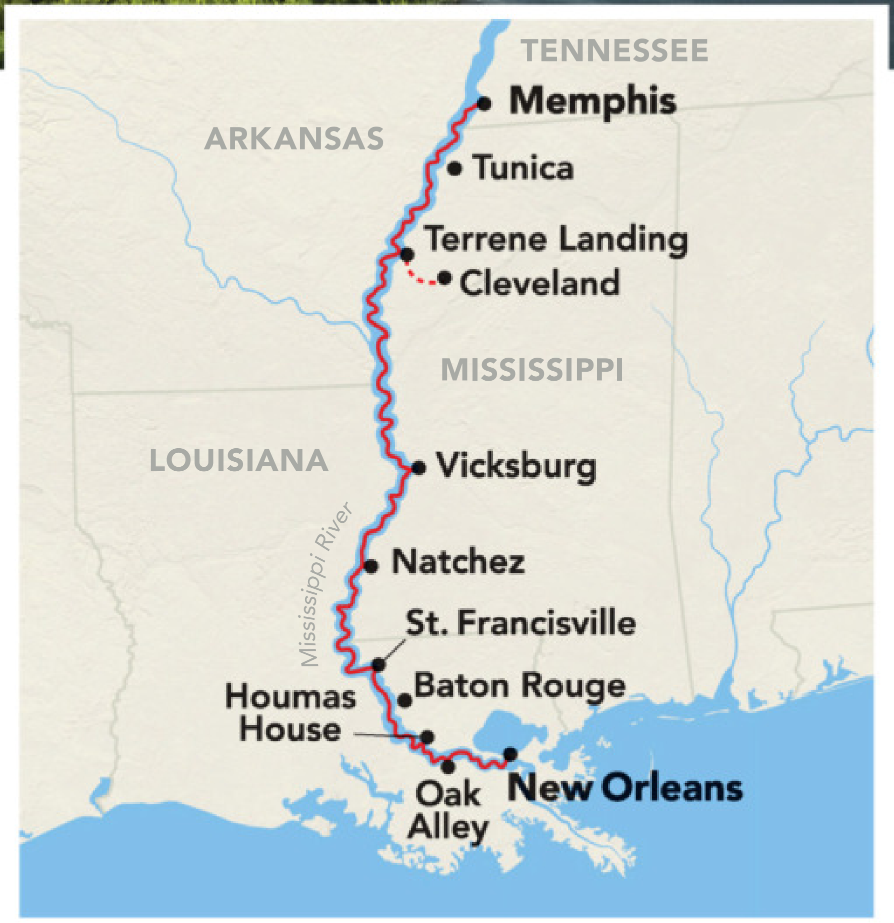
Well-Seasoned

The latest pieces from the BHG line at Walmart are redefining indoor-outdoor style.

With their painterly motifs, interesting shapes, and natural materials, these outdoor-friendly pieces are worth using year-round. ● **Wine Glass and Goblet** Chunky silhouettes with a retro-cool feel. Acrylic Textured, from $3 each ● **Place Mat** Instant texture for the table. Lauren Fabric, $5 each ● **Floral Melamine Dinnerware** Stylish enough to use every day; durable enough to handle it. $3 each ● **Tablecloth** Subtle white pinstripes on a warm, goes-with-everything neutral. Beige Pinstripe, $12 ● **Flatware** Minimalist gold flatware with a trendy brushed finish. River 20-Piece Flatware Set in Gold, $20

by LAUREN BENGTSON *photos* BRIE GOLDMAN

AMERICAN CRUISE LINES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1

A timeless tulip-and-trellis pattern in modern black and white.

2

This casual-cool beaded plant hanger looks as good in the living room as it does on the porch.

4

3

5

6

Sleek black steel and trad woven resin wicker cater to laid-back transitional style.

7

① Floral Decorative Outdoor Throw Pillow in Off White/Black (18"x18"), $10

② Fits a 3"-6" pot and holds up to 40 pounds of weight. Wood Brown Beaded Plant Hanger, $10

③ This slim cement-and-wood plant stand doubles as a cocktail perch in a pinch. 2-Pack Gray Cement Wood Plant Stand, $35

④ A versatile tiered server with chic gold hardware. Galvanized Steel Gray 2-Tier Serving Tray Stand, $19

⑤ Use it for drinks or as a vase for flowers. Galvanized Steel Green Pitcher, $10

⑥ The holy grail of rocking chairs: stylish, comfortable, and front-porch approved. Ventura Outdoor Steel Rocking Chair, Natural Rush Weave, $97

⑦ A fashion-forward plant pot for a covered porch or patio. Athena 12" Round Bulrush Basket Planter, $20 ■

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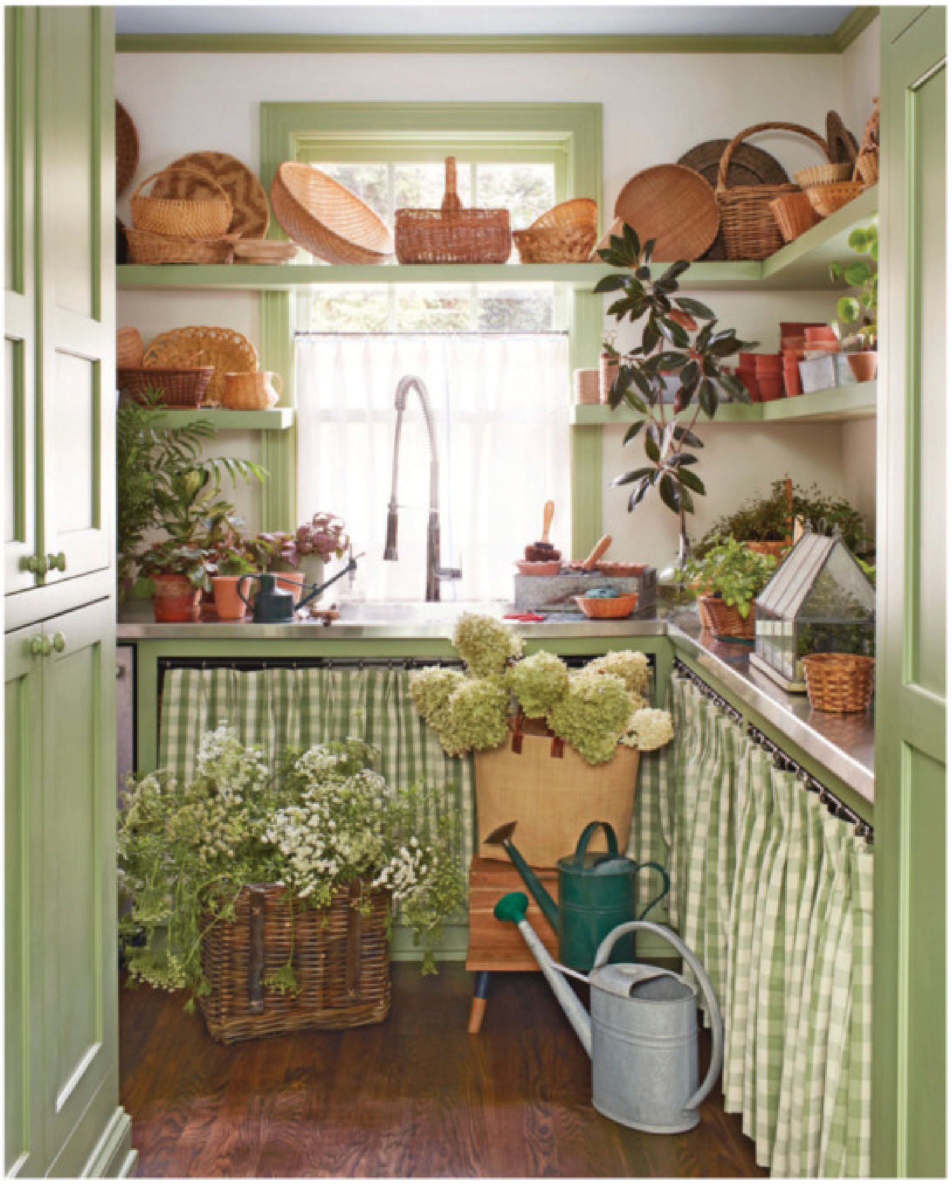
Power Sconce

Wall sconces are trending in a big way, and this one makes it easy to jump on the bandwagon. It's battery-operated, rechargeable, and remote-controlled—no wiring required. *Style bonus:* There are over 160 shade options to suit your room.

Single Chukka Cordless Wall Fixture in Antique Brass, from $170; *us.pooky.com*

"After visiting Paris for Design Week, I'm happy to report that *rattan will be everywhere* this year—inside and outside, on furniture, lighting, and accessories. It's now officially considered seasonless decor."

—MONIKA EYERS, *senior home editor*



For the love of Skirted Cabinets

Talk about a renaissance. Pleated and patterned cabinet curtains are popping up everywhere, including this space, *above*, from designer Caroline Gidiere's new book, *Interiors for a Life in Good Taste* (Rizzoli New York). A nod to cottage style or a classic corner bistro, a cabinet skirt or café curtain can solve a multitude of problems. You could even pop one on the front of a piece of furniture, like an open media cabinet or shelf, or at the base of a sink to hide clutter.

TRY THIS

The Two-Ingredient Bagel

These buzzy breakfast carbs have been all over social media again this year, and for good reason. The dough has just two ingredients—self-rising flour and Greek yogurt—there's no proofing or boiling, and they're ready in about half an hour. A finishing flourish of flaky salt or everything bagel seasoning is optional, but adding this recipe to your baking repertoire feels obligatory. ■

ONE, TWO, BAGEL!

Scan the QR code for the detailed recipe.

PHOTOS: (SCONCE) COURTESY OF POOKY LIGHTING; (BAGELS) JAKE STERNQUIST; (PANTRY) ISABEL PARRA FROM *INTERIORS FOR A LIFE IN GOOD TASTE* BY CAROLINE GIDIERE (RIZZOLI NEW YORK); ILLUSTRATION: JESSICA DURRANT

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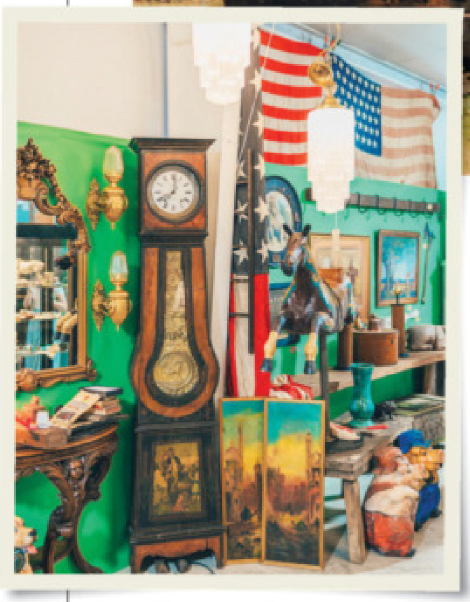
Destination: ANTIQUES

If you love the thrill of the hunt and bringing one-of-a-kind treasures home, nothing compares to a great vintage and antiques fair. Here are six of the best in the country to put on your calendar in the coming year.



At Round Top Antiques Fair, Blue Hills, *top,* and The Big Red Barn, *above,* are favorites among interior designers for their well-curated mix of antiques.

Round Top Antiques Fair

Round Top, Texas

DATES March 27–April 1 and October 16–21, 2025, and January 22–25, 2026

Three times a year, the tiny town of Round Top, TX (population 90), hosts what's arguably the preeminent antiques fair in the country. Over 4,000 dealers display their treasures across 11 miles of fields during the spring and fall shows. To best experience the event, you'll need a car and shoes made for walking. You'll find most of the high-end dealers at The Big Red Barn and the Marburger Farm fair (competitive buyers are known to run across the fields to Marburger on opening day). Spots like Blue Hills, the Compound, and Excess I and Excess II are great places to find home goods too. If you want less shopping competition, visit the winter show, which is markedly smaller and less busy. *roundtoptexasantiques.com*

STAY HERE While some visitors opt to stay in Austin or Houston, both about a 90-minute drive, Hotel Lulu is a coveted Round Top option. The 14-room hotel features six 19th-century bungalows and three private cottages with vintage and antique pieces. *hotellulutx.com*

Palm Springs Vintage Market

Palm Springs, California

DATES Monthly October through May

The desert town of Palm Springs, CA, is known as a modernist-architecture mecca. So it should be no surprise that the Palm Springs Vintage Market is one of the top spots for midcentury finds. On the first Sunday of every month from October to May, roughly 200 vendors set up all kinds of colorful, sleek wares, including retro furniture, funky art, and '60s glassware, plus vintage clothing and jewelry. Temperatures can be over 100°F in spring and fall, so go in January or February if you prefer cooler weather. *palmspringsvintagemarket.com*

STAY HERE Interior designer Mark D. Sikes has infused his signature blue-and-white palette into the cheery 28-room Holiday House in downtown Palm Springs—just a 10-minute walk to the vintage market. *holidayhouseps.com*

For a retro-shopping binge, pair a visit to the Palm Springs Vintage Market, *left,* with a trip to the area's many thrift shops, clustered on Palm Canyon Drive and Sunny Dunes Road.

PHOTOS: (BLUE HILLS, CLOCK) STEPHANIE DAISY; (PATIO SET) MID CENTURY MIRANDA

by SARA BLISS

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The vendors at Trade Secrets in Connecticut, *left* and *below,* are evenly split between those selling antique garden decor and rare plants for Northeast gardens.

Trade Secrets Rare Plants & Garden Antiques

Salisbury, Connecticut

DATES May 17–18, 2025

Northeast garden enthusiasts love to welcome spring with a trip to Trade Secrets. This May will mark the 25th anniversary of the popular garden sale and tour started by interior designer Bunny Williams and horticulturist Naomi Blumenthal. One day of the event is dedicated to shopping, with over 50 nurseries and antiques vendors selling unusual plants, antique garden furniture, and outdoor objects. The other day offers tours of exquisite private gardens in the area. Tickets start at $25; proceeds go to Project SAGE, a local nonprofit domestic violence agency. *tradesecretsct.com*

STAY HERE For a quintessential New England inn experience, check into The White Hart in Salisbury, established in 1806. Each of the 16 rooms is individually decorated in a classic style—think poster beds, tufted armchairs, and floral pillows. *whitehartinn.com*

In Ohio, the Springfield Antique Show Extravaganza lives up to its big name, but it's slightly less overwhelming than other large fairs in the country. You can cover a lot of it in a day.

Springfield Antique Show & Flea Market

Springfield, Ohio

DATES May 16–18 and September 19–21, 2025

A popular fair that runs monthly for most of the year, the Springfield Antique Show swells to 10 times its usual size every May and September. During those Extravaganza shows, 2,000-plus vendors convene on the Clark County Fairgrounds for three days. The breadth of offerings includes crafts, flea market finds, and high-end antiques. You'll also find a variety of regional foods, so you might come home with antique silverware, a Queen Anne tiger maple highboy, *and* a delicious gourmet mustard. *jenkinsandco.com/springfield-antique-show*

STAY HERE There are plenty of motels in the area, but if you're willing to venture out farther, you'll find the 28-room Mills Park Hotel in Yellow Springs. The charming 10-year-old inn is modeled after a stately home that the town's first settler, William Mills, built in 1842. *millsparkhotel.com*

PHOTOS: (TRADE SECRETS OVERHEAD) LIME ROCK PARK, (FLOWERS) ANNE DAY PHOTOGRAPHY, (FURNITURE) LISA MAUGHMER/SPRINGFIELD ANTIQUE SHOW

Designers and other savvy shoppers regularly hit the South Building of Scott Antique Market in Atlanta for its artisan-made finds, like these traditional Turkish textiles.

Brimfield Antique Flea Market

Brimfield, Massachusetts

DATES May 13–18, July 8–13, and September 2–7, 2025

You'll need multiple days to take in Brimfield, the oldest outdoor antiques fair in the country, with over 6,000 vendors set up across multiple fields. The array of wares is impressive, with an emphasis on American-made items. Each area has a particular bent: Heart-O-the-Mart features more high-end items, for example, while Black Swan Meadows offers an interesting mix of industrial and handmade pieces. Dealers are more open to discounts on Saturday and Sunday as the fair is wrapping up, so haggle accordingly. *brimfieldantiquefleamarket.com*

STAY HERE Most of the area's hotels are part of national chains, but a 20-minute drive away you'll find the well-priced Wellsworth Hotel in a 160-year-old building. The brick facade, grand spiral staircase, and hand-carved fireplace showcase the building's architectural history; the rooms are furnished simply. *wellsworthhotel.com*

Bring a cart—or rent one on-site—to haul your goods around the expansive Brimfield market, *above* and *right*.

PHOTOS: (RUGS) SCOTT ANTIQUE MARKET, (PAINTINGS, TENT) MOLLY WALPUCK

Scott Antique Market

Atlanta

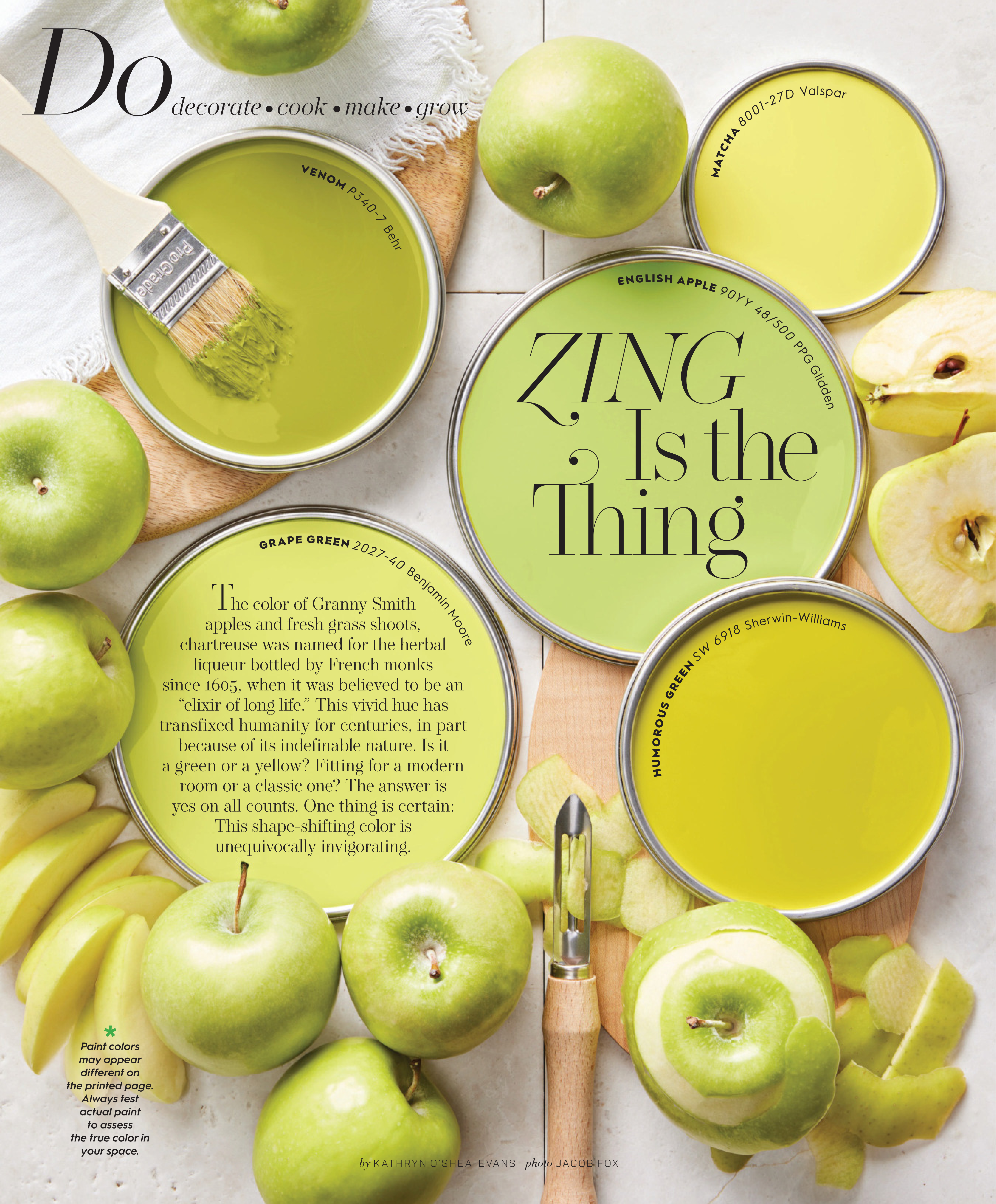
DATES Second weekend of every month

Dedicated shoppers like to hit Scott's, as it's known, multiple times throughout the year, since about a third of the 3,500-plus vendors change each month. The event is divided across two Atlanta Expo buildings: Both the North and South buildings showcase a mix of high- and low-end antiques, vintage silverware, artisan textiles, and fine jewelry. But the South Building leans more modern and is a great place to discover new furniture makers and artisans. A free shuttle lets you go easily between the two venues. Paying cash will help you get an even better price. *scottantiquemarket.com*

STAY HERE The Kimpton Overland Hotel Atlanta Airport is only 3 miles from the Expo Center. If you don't mind a 20-minute drive, try the stylish new Forth Hotel in Atlanta's vibrant Old Fourth Ward neighborhood. *kimptonoverlandhotel.com* and *forthatlanta.com* ■

ZING Is the Thing

The color of Granny Smith apples and fresh grass shoots, chartreuse was named for the herbal liqueur bottled by French monks since 1605, when it was believed to be an "elixir of long life." This vivid hue has transfixed humanity for centuries, in part because of its indefinable nature. Is it a green or a yellow? Fitting for a modern room or a classic one? The answer is yes on all counts. One thing is certain: This shape-shifting color is unequivocally invigorating.


VENOM P340-7 Behr
MATCHA 8001-27D Valspar
ENGLISH APPLE 90YY 48/500 PPG Glidden
GRAPE GREEN 2027-40 Benjamin Moore
HUMOROUS GREEN SW 6918 Sherwin-Williams
Pro Grade

* *Paint colors may appear different on the printed page. Always test actual paint to assess the true color in your space.*

by KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS *photo* JACOB FOX

When London designer Jessica Williamson was tasked with revamping her client's bathroom, *below*, they selected "a poppy lime green" (Paint & Paper Library Euphorbia) in a nod to an adjacent earthy green closet. The feeling is enveloping but not boring, thanks to subtle color shifts between materials as well as a contrasting hit of orange in the artwork. "When working with two different textures, I've never found it to be integral that colors match exactly, as light will play and reflect differently off the surfaces regardless," says Williamson, head of interiors at architecture and design firm Bradley Van Der Straeten. Tonal tweaks are similarly vital in the sitting room of Chris Benz's Victorian home in Bellport, NY, *right,* where the designer behind Cult Projects painted the ceiling and crown molding a brighter tone (Farrow & Ball Yellowcake) than the walls, trim, and mantel (Farrow & Ball Hay). "The ceiling kind of reflects the light down onto the walls, so you almost get an iridescence," he says. Like Williamson, Benz incorporated orange accents for a pleasing sense of unexpected tension.

Where We Saw It

It's possible to make even a Kermit color feel inviting, as we saw in this Kit Kemp-designed dining room at the Kips Bay Show House in New York. "We wanted every detail to be infused with a cheerful sense of joy," Kemp says. Benjamin Moore Bright Yellow on the ceiling paired with shades of green and coral was key.

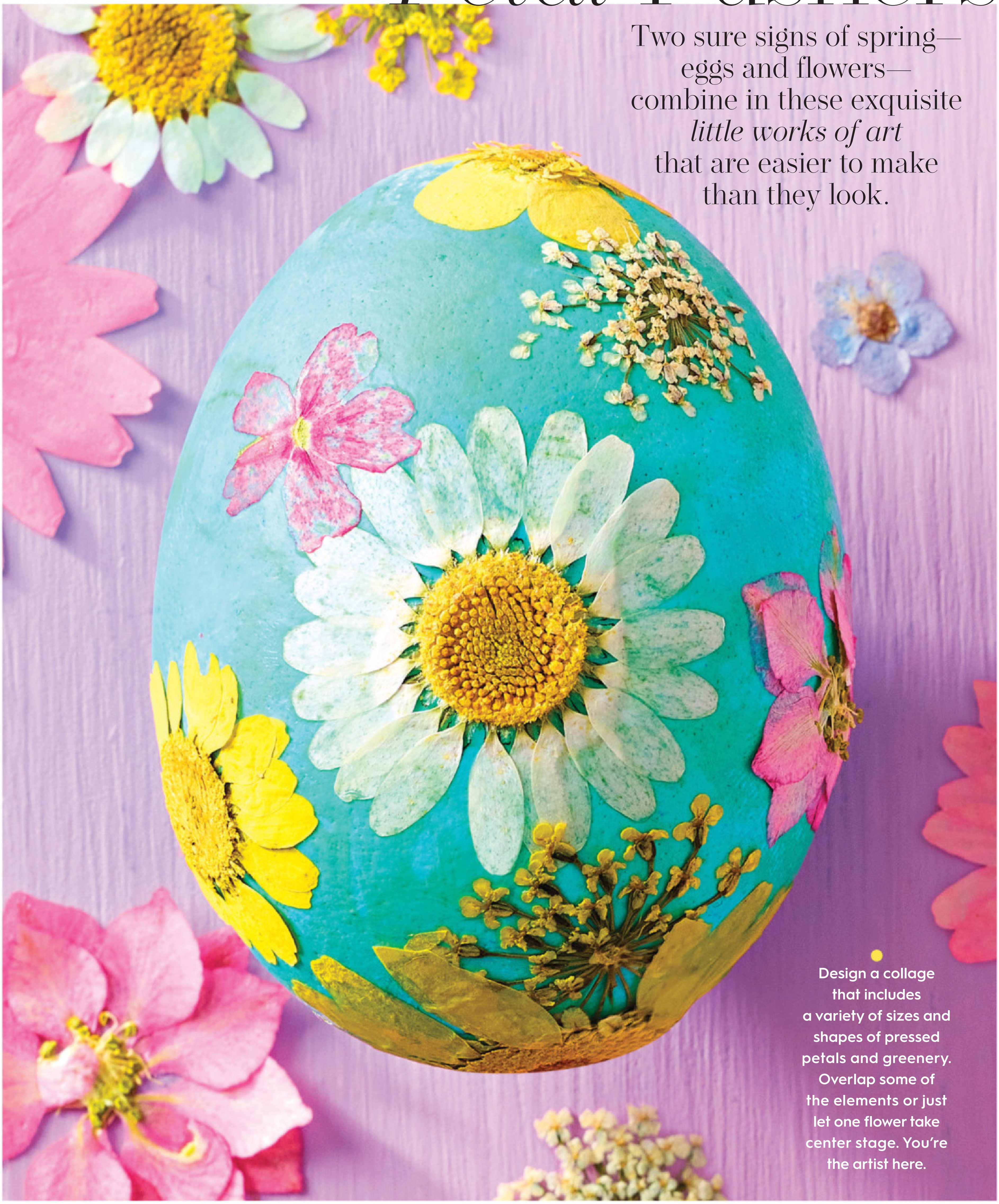
Readers Write In

JUICY News

We asked BHG followers on social media what they would name these tangy chartreuse shades. Here are a few responses we loved. ● **CITRINE DREAMS**—Susan Schafer, Lindsay, NE ● **SUNLIT GOLDEN GREENS**—Deborah Nolan, Syracuse, NY ● **GRANNY SMITH GLOW**—Lauren Fialko, Yorkville, IL ● **ZESTY CHARTREUSE**—Mindy Horn, Lincoln, NE ■

STYLING: (PAINT) JESSICA THOMAS; PHOTOS: (FIREPLACE) KELLY MARSHALL, (BATHROOM) FRENCH AND TYE, (LIVING ROOM) NICKOLAS SARGENT

Petal Pushers



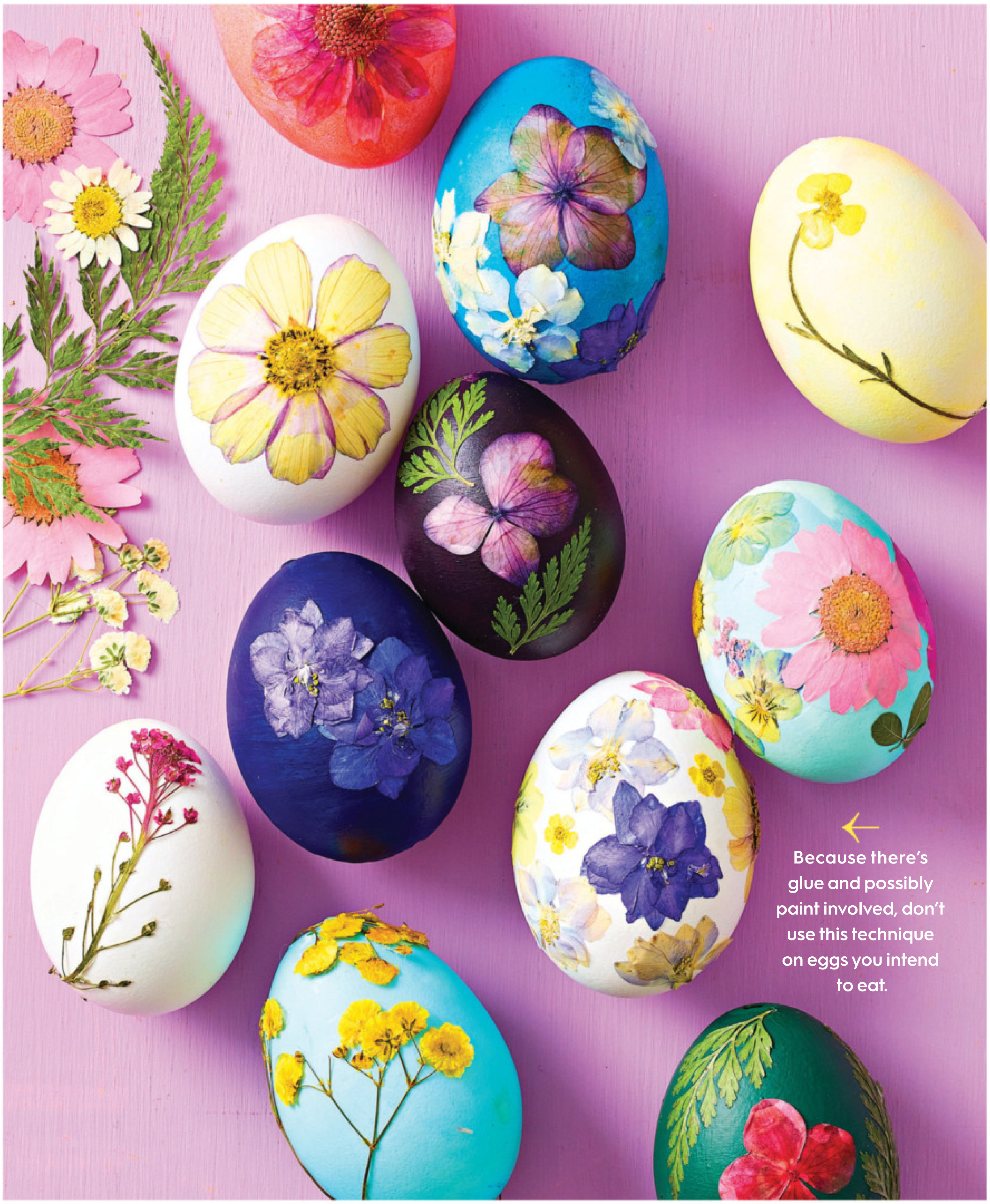
Two sure signs of spring—
eggs and flowers—
combine in these exquisite
little works of art
that are easier to make
than they look.

Design a collage that includes a variety of sizes and shapes of pressed petals and greenery. Overlap some of the elements or just let one flower take center stage. You're the artist here.

by KATHY BARNES *photos* BRIE GOLDMAN *projects by* KATIE LEPORTE

Color Story

When laying down a base of color for your botanical beauties, you have choices. If you want dramatic, go with dark acrylic craft paints. (Put a skewer through the blow holes for mess-free painting and drying.) For bright, saturated pastels, we like Shanlinly Gel Food Coloring ($8; *amazon.com*) diluted in water. Or skip color entirely and let those blooms pop off of plain, undyed eggs.



Because there's glue and possibly paint involved, don't use this technique on eggs you intend to eat.

Step-by-Step

Dried, pressed flowers and greenery meant for crafts are the shortcut.

1 **PREP EGGS** Carefully poke a hole in each end of a raw egg and remove the yolk and whites using a bulb syringe. Clean shells and let dry.

2 **ADD COLOR** Paint eggs or dye with food coloring, if desired. Let dry.

3 **SELECT FLOWERS** You'll need a variety of small dried and pressed flowers and greenery. We used Nuanchu Pressed Flowers (includes tweezers), $10; *amazon.com*

4 **GLUE ON DESIGNS** Use a paintbrush to dab craft glue on the egg where you plan to put a flower. Apply flower to the glued area using tweezers. Let dry and repeat as you like. ■

For the Love of Ranch

We would call it a comeback, but if you ask us, ranch never stopped being cool. The tangy, herb-flecked seasoning has been around since the '50s, and its rise to flavor fame goes way beyond the salad bar.

DRESSED-UP RANCH WEDGE SALAD

We took a classic wedge salad and made it even better. A quick freeze makes the iceberg an extra-crispy base for full-flavor toppers: salami, peppers, ricotta salata, grated hard-boiled eggs, and our homemade buttermilk ranch.

RECIPES BEGIN ON PAGE 93.

by ERIN HOOKER *photos* CARSON DOWNING *food styling* KELSEY MOYLAN

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Originally made famous by a California steakhouse, ranch is best known for its buttermilk tang and herb-forward flavor, and the fact that it tastes good on almost everything. ←

SMASHED RANCH BROCCOLI

Take veggies beyond boring with this steam-smash-roast method. Spread shredded Parm on a sheet pan, then smoosh steamed broccoli on top before seasoning florets with ranch mix and roasting. Break apart the frico-edged veg and serve with sriracha-spiked ranch.

RANCH-SEASONED CHICKEN KATSU SANDWICHES

This extra-crispy chicken sando is all ranch, all the way through. Mix homemade dressing powder into the panko breading, smear the buns with ranch dressing before toasting, and add another slick of buttermilk ranch dressing to the veggie toppers.

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CHICKEN-BACON-RANCH CASSEROLE WITH RANCH CROUTONS

The ever-popular C-B-R combo meets Midwestern hot dish in this weeknight-friendly meal that comes together in 40 minutes. A buttermilk ranch-sour cream sauce gives the base irresistible flavor, but it's the tangy, crunchy sourdough croutons (glazed with ranch butter) that put this dish right over the top.

MILK-WASHED GIN HAS A SMOOTH FLAVOR AND ADDS SOME BODY TO THIS STIR-TOGETHER COCKTAIL. REFRIGERATE THE SPIRIT UP TO TWO MONTHS AND USE IN ANY GIN COCKTAIL.

RANCH GIN & TONIC

A Spanish-style "gin tonic" upgrades the basic G&T with fresh herbs, citrus or cucumber, and spices like peppercorns and juniper berries. Our savory, ranch-inspired version incorporates fresh dill, shallot, garlic, and mustard seeds. ■

WEDDING COLOR *of* THE YEAR

VERONA SUNSET

You are invited
to
the wedding
of
Margareth
Anna Luchesi
and
William
Patrick Ritch
Saturday
May 2, 2027
5 PM
Giardino Giusti
Verona, Italy
reception to follow
YOU ARE INVITED
TO THE WEDDING OF
05
ALAIA & QUINN
06
SATURDAY, MAY SIXTH
twenty-twenty seven
C&B
MR. AND MRS. ROBERT C. WREN
REQUEST THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY
AT THE WEDDING OF THEIR DAUGHTER
CHARLOTTE WREN
TO
BROCK HENRY PHAM
SUNDAY, THE TWENTIETH OF JUNE
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-SEVEN
AT SIX O'CLOCK
THE FIELD CLUB
GREENWICH, CONNECTICUT
SAVE THE DATE
FOR THE WEDDING WEEKEND OF
Charlotte Wren
and
Brock Pham
SATURDAY & SUNDAY
JUNE 19 - 20, 2027
GREENWICH, CONNECTICUT
formal invitation to follow

Cockwise from top: Wedding Invitation: **Giardino** by Pati Cascino • Save the Date: **Racquet** by Megan Davis • Wedding Invitation: **Racquet** by Megan Davis • Wedding Invitation: **Alaia** by Jessie Renee.

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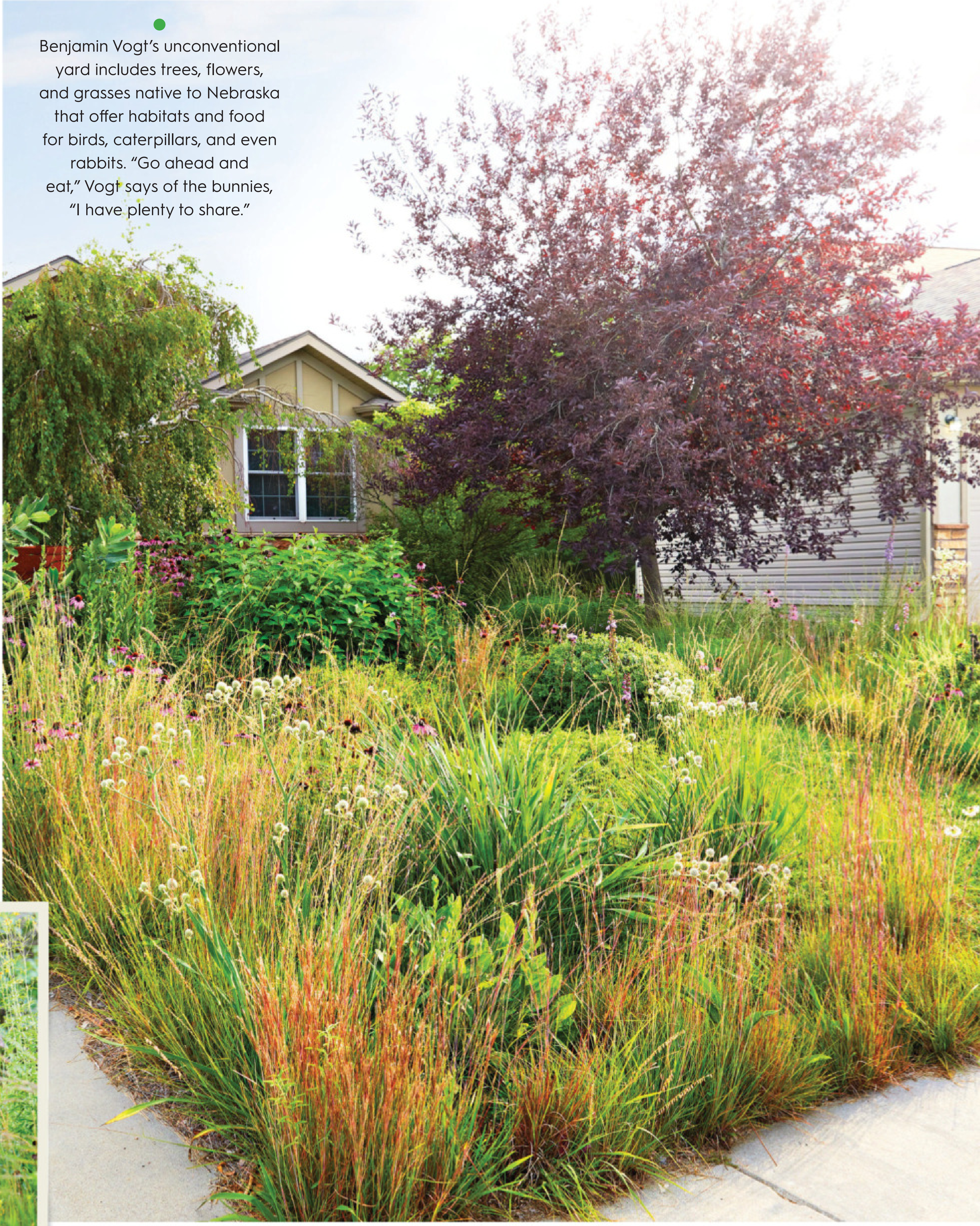
Pocket PRAIRIE

One homeowner breaks the suburban-lawn mold, creating a front yard meadow full of native plants—along with birds and bees.

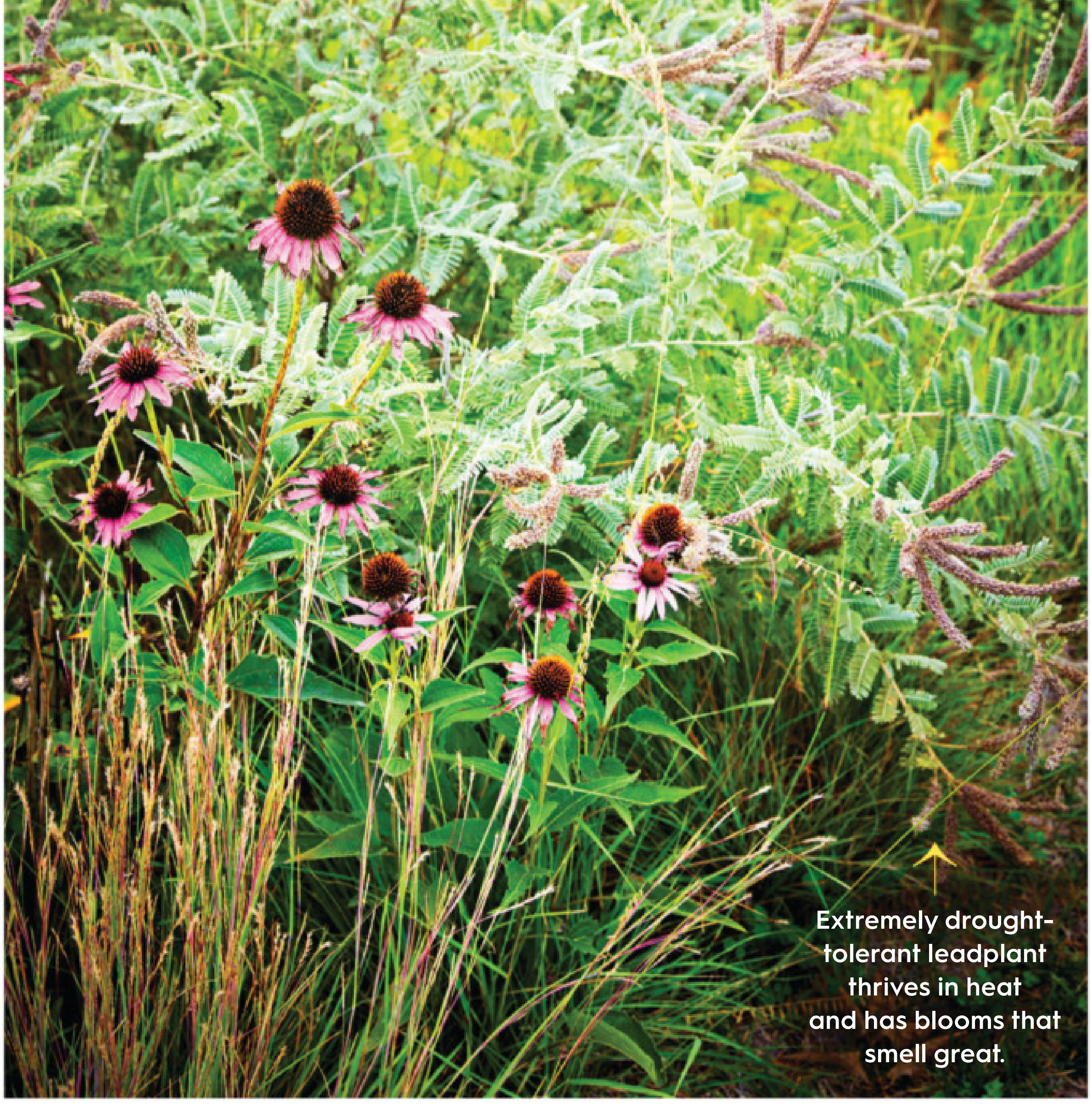
When gardener Benjamin Vogt first spied a caterpillar eating the swamp milkweed he'd planted in his Lincoln, NE, front garden, he almost reached for the pesticide. But he decided to do a little research first. That's when he discovered it was a monarch butterfly caterpillar, which relies on native milkweed for food. "From there, I was off to the races," he says. He turned his front yard into a meadow of natives—plants that had evolved naturally in his region and provided food and shelter to pollinators.

The experience was life-changing for the then English teacher. Eleven years later, he's a landscape designer focusing on native plant gardens. "These are so much more than plants," says Vogt, who wrote a book on the topic called *Prairie Up*. "They support a whole local ecology."



Benjamin Vogt's unconventional yard includes trees, flowers, and grasses native to Nebraska that offer habitats and food for birds, caterpillars, and even rabbits. "Go ahead and eat," Vogt says of the bunnies, "I have plenty to share."

by JOHANNA SILVER *photos* CARSON DOWNING

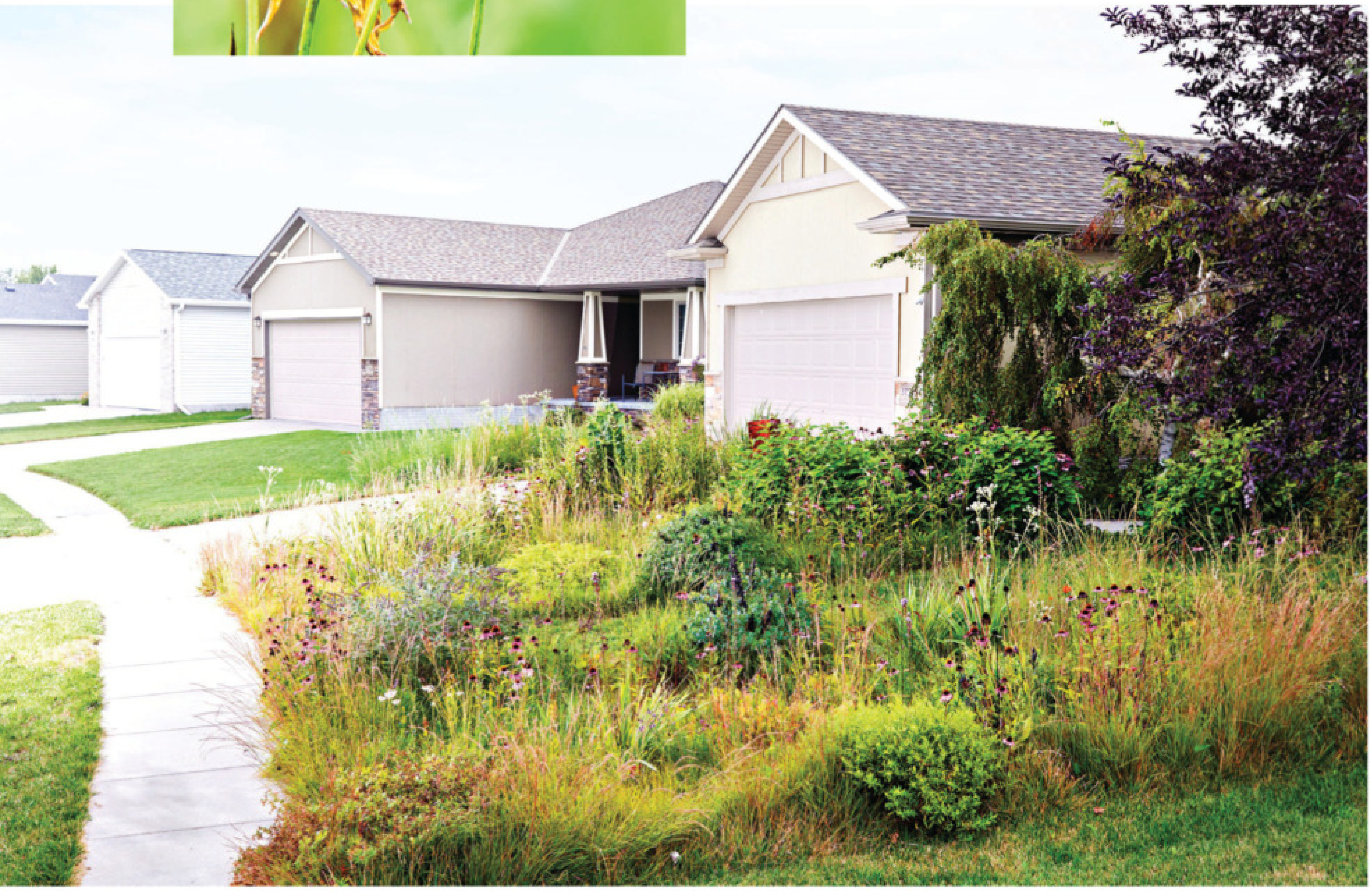


Extremely drought-tolerant leadplant thrives in heat and has blooms that smell great.

Vogt stresses that when planting for butterflies, it's important to include host plants (those that feed the insect during the larval stage) as well as flowers that provide pollen for the adults. Leaving spent flowers on these plants, such as the prairie coneflower, *below,* provides nutrition for an even longer period.

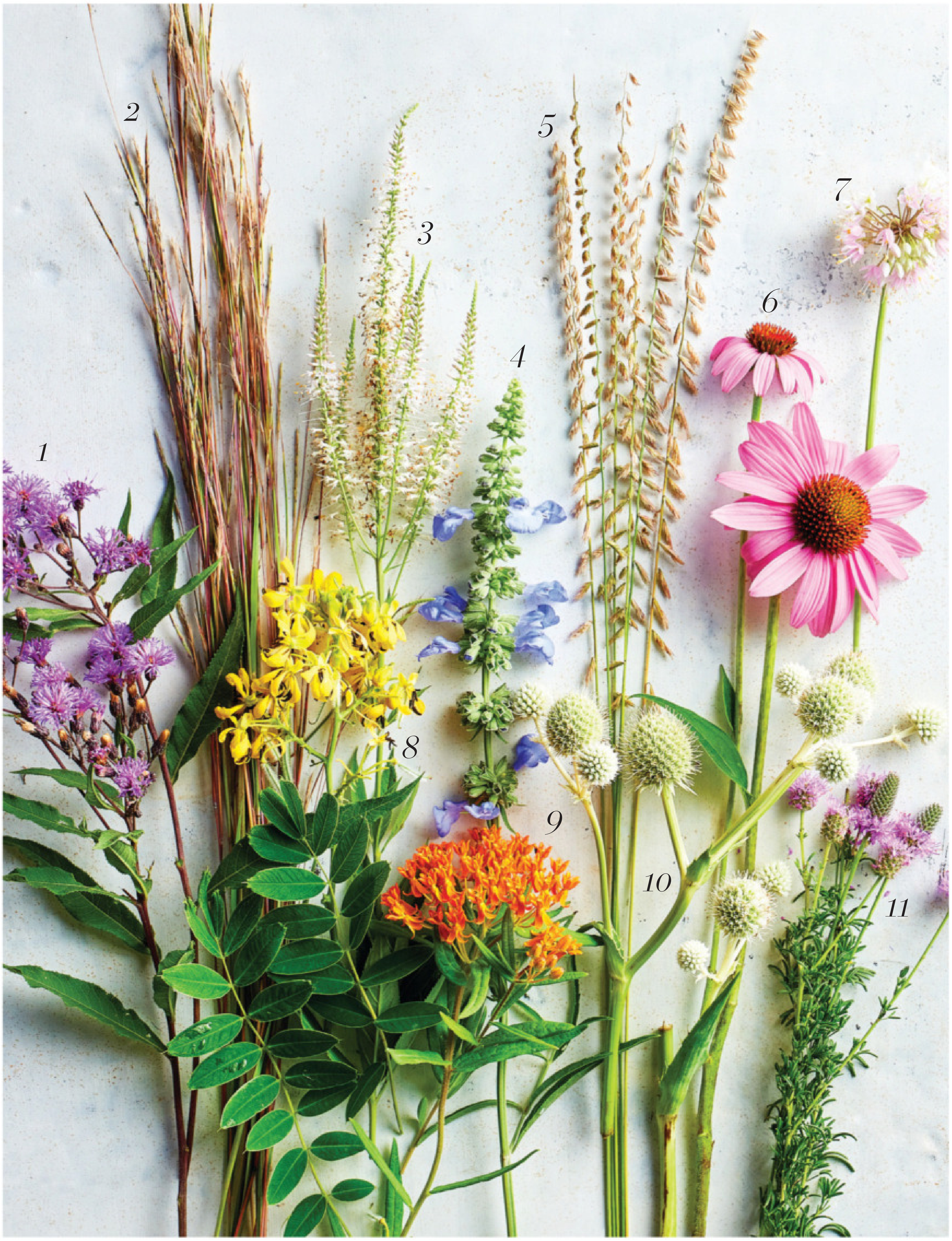
"THE PLANTS START TO MOVE AROUND AND TELL YOU WHERE THEY WANT TO BE. THAT'S WHEN THE MAGIC HAPPENS—WHEN YOU CAN LET THE PLANTS TEACH YOU."

—BENJAMIN VOGT, *landscape designer*



The gray-green leaves and purple flowers of a leadplant, *above,* provide the background for coneflower *(Echinacea purpurea)*—one of the more well-known plants that Vogt employs. "I use a lot of 'wilder' plants, but echinacea is familiar," Vogt says. "It helps people make sense of the landscape."

The front yard, *left,* stands out amid the traditional lawns of Vogt's neighbors. Because the plants have naturally evolved in the region, they're fairly hands-off. Vogt doesn't use irrigation or fertilizer and mows only once a year (in spring to encourage fresh growth).



THE GARDEN PALETTE

Instead of a flat expanse of green turf, Vogt's front yard meadow shows off the variety of colors and textures possible in native garden design. While most bloom in spring and summer, the plants have winter interest, too, in the form of seed heads. "I am often selecting plants for how good they look in winter since that's half the year here," Vogt says.

1
PRAIRIE IRONWEED
Tall stems are topped with magenta flowers in late summer, iron-color seed heads in fall and winter.

2
LITTLE BLUESTEM
Grass that turns bright copper in early autumn.

3
CULVER'S ROOT
White spiky flowers with a long bloom time.

4
BLUE SAGE
Native to the prairies of Nebraska and loved by pollinators.

5
SIDEOATS GRAMA
Drought-tolerant fast grower that helps suppress weeds.

6
CONEFLOWER
A cheerful standby in summer with dramatic seed heads in winter.

7
NODDING ONION
Blooms in August, when many other flowers are spent.

8
WILD SENNA
Self-seeds freely; seed heads turn black-brown in the winter.

9
BUTTERFLY WEED
A bright, shorter-than-the-average milkweed species reaching only 2 feet.

10
RATTLESNAKE MASTER
Blue-gray foliage that makes a great foil for colorful plants.

11
PURPLE PRAIRIE CLOVER
Incredibly drought-tolerant; can attract rabbits. ■

In addition to the traditional symbolic Seder plate, Fany Gerson's Passover spread includes riffs on Jewish flavors, including her Roast Chicken with Apricots (shared on *page 48*), inspired by a family recipe.

A Modern SEDER Table

In an essay from *The Jewish Holiday Table: A World of Recipes, Traditions & Stories to Celebrate All Year Long*, pastry chef and cookbook author Fany Gerson shares how she adapted her Passover menu to reflect her Ukrainian-Mexican heritage.

by FANY GERSON *photos* PENNY DE LOS SANTOS

The first real Seder I hosted was a year after I graduated from culinary school. I was about 20 and living in a tiny New York City apartment, far away from my family in Mexico City. When I realized I didn't have anywhere to go for Seder [the traditional, ceremonial meal that helps tell the story of Passover], I decided that I was going to make my home the place that people—whether they were Jewish or not—could come to for Seder. I was keeping the tradition I grew up with but making it my own.

I was homesick and wanted to make the dishes that my family ate at my grandmother Ana's house. My great-grandmother Babi Lena, who emigrated from Ukraine to Mexico in 1926, was the one who originally cooked these dishes.

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Babi's menu was pretty traditional of Ashkenazi Jewish customs, but she gave the spread a few Mexican updates. For example, she served her matzah ball soup with lime and made a red gefilte fish that was served warm in a spicy tomato sauce with lots of white pepper.

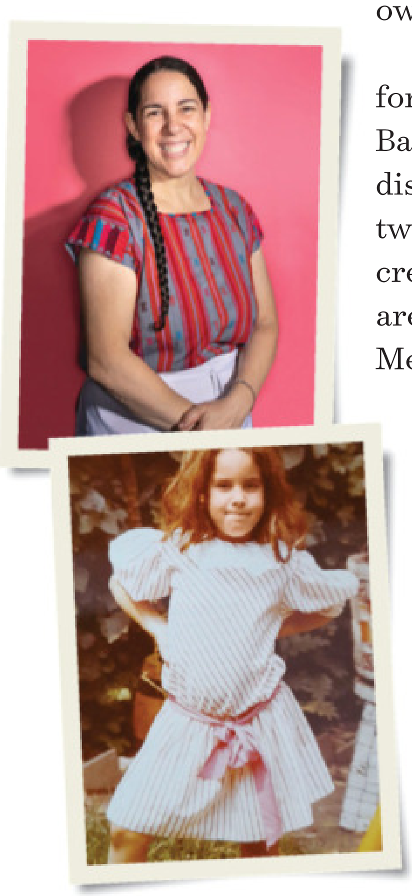
At the time, I'd never made Babi's recipes, so I called relatives and a cook who used to work at Ana's house [for help]. I relied on their recipes and my memory and started cooking, imagining Babi by my side guiding me—and giving me permission to make the recipes my own as a new immigrant.

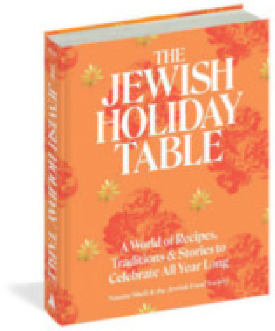
Every year I've cooked for Passover since, I've felt Babi's presence. She created dishes that bridged her two worlds, and I've since created my own—dishes that are rooted in nostalgia for Mexico and our relationship.

I've hosted up to 30 people at my Seder since that first one. One year I didn't even have a dining table, so we sat on the floor around a coffee table, eating from mismatched plates and Tupperware, and drinking from plastic cups and empty containers.

I told my best friend in New York, Ian (who has since passed away), that I hoped one day to be like my aunt Sari and host the way she did. She has a beautiful home and an incredible collection of silverware. Ian told me, "You know what? Maybe you will, and maybe you won't, but this is what's beautiful about it. This is what you have; it's all heart."

Ian was right. Twenty years later, I still don't have a complete set of anything or enough space for everyone, but it doesn't matter. I love, love, love hosting in my small apartment, and I wouldn't have it any other way. And now I get to share these traditions with my son, Gael—while my babi continues to be by my side.


Fany Gerson was born and raised in Mexico City and now lives in New York, where she runs Fan-Fan Doughnuts and La Newyorkina.



Jewish Cooking Traditions

"Jewish food is not a static thing," says Naama Shefi, author of *The Jewish Holiday Table: A World of Recipes, Traditions & Stories to Celebrate All Year Long* and founder of the Jewish Food Society. "Across the Diaspora, cooks adopted and adapted dishes and culinary techniques." Rituals, holidays, and kosher laws remain at the center of Jewish cuisine, but Jewish families' recipes and holiday menus are as diverse as the people.

Fany's story is part of the collection of narratives and recipes featured in Shefi's book. $35, *hachette bookgroup.com*

EXCERPTED FROM *THE JEWISH HOLIDAY TABLE* BY NAAMA SHEFI AND THE JEWISH FOOD SOCIETY (ARTISAN BOOKS), COPYRIGHT © 2024. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF FANY GERSON

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LANE'S END FARM,
VERSAILLES

Roast Chicken with Apricots

HANDS ON 20 min.
TOTAL TIME 3 hr. 15 min.

½	cup dried apricots
4	Tbsp. unsalted butter or nondairy butter
5	garlic cloves
2	tsp. kosher salt, plus more for seasoning
¼	tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more for seasoning
3	Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
3	Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1	4- to 5-lb. chicken
8	thyme sprigs
2½	cups low-sodium homemade or purchased chicken broth
1	small onion, cut into 1-inch-thick wedges
½	cup finely chopped shallots
¼	cup red wine vinegar
2	Tbsp. apricot preserves
½	cup chopped fresh herbs, such as chives, flat-leaf parsley, and/or mint (optional)

1. Put apricots in a small saucepan; cover with water by about 1 inch, and bring to a boil. Adjust heat to a simmer; cook until apricots are very tender, about 30 minutes. (Turkish apricots may take longer.) Drain; let cool.

2. Put softened apricots, butter, and 1 garlic clove in a food processor and process to a smooth, thick puree. Scrape mixture into a small bowl and season with 1 tsp. salt and the pepper.

3. Transfer 2 heaping Tbsp. of the apricot butter to a small container and refrigerate. Put remaining apricot butter in a small bowl and whisk in lemon juice and 3 Tbsp. olive oil to make a glaze. Set aside.

4. Arrange a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 450°F.

5. Place the chicken on a cutting board and pat dry with paper towels. Season the cavity with 1 tsp. salt and a large pinch of pepper and stuff with 4 thyme sprigs. Loosely tie the legs together with kitchen twine.

6. Season the outside of the chicken generously with salt and pepper and set it breast side up in a small roasting pan. (Try to choose a pan that's not too much larger than the chicken.) Carefully pour broth into roasting pan. Arrange onion wedges and the remaining 4 garlic cloves and 4 thyme sprigs around chicken.

7. Roast chicken for 15 minutes, then reduce the oven temperature to 375°F and roast for another 20 minutes.

8. Remove the chicken from the oven and brush or spread it with the apricot glaze (the glaze will be thick), making sure to get the lower parts of the legs and the wings. Return the chicken to the oven and roast for another 25 minutes, then coat with apricot glaze again.

9. Return the chicken to the oven and roast until fully cooked, another 15 to 30 minutes. A thermometer inserted in the thickest part of a thigh should read at least 175°F. When the chicken is done, remove it from the oven.

10. Tilt the chicken to pour out any juices from the cavity, then transfer the chicken to a platter; cover loosely with foil and let rest for 15 minutes. Strain the pan drippings into a small bowl, pressing on the onion and garlic, and set aside.

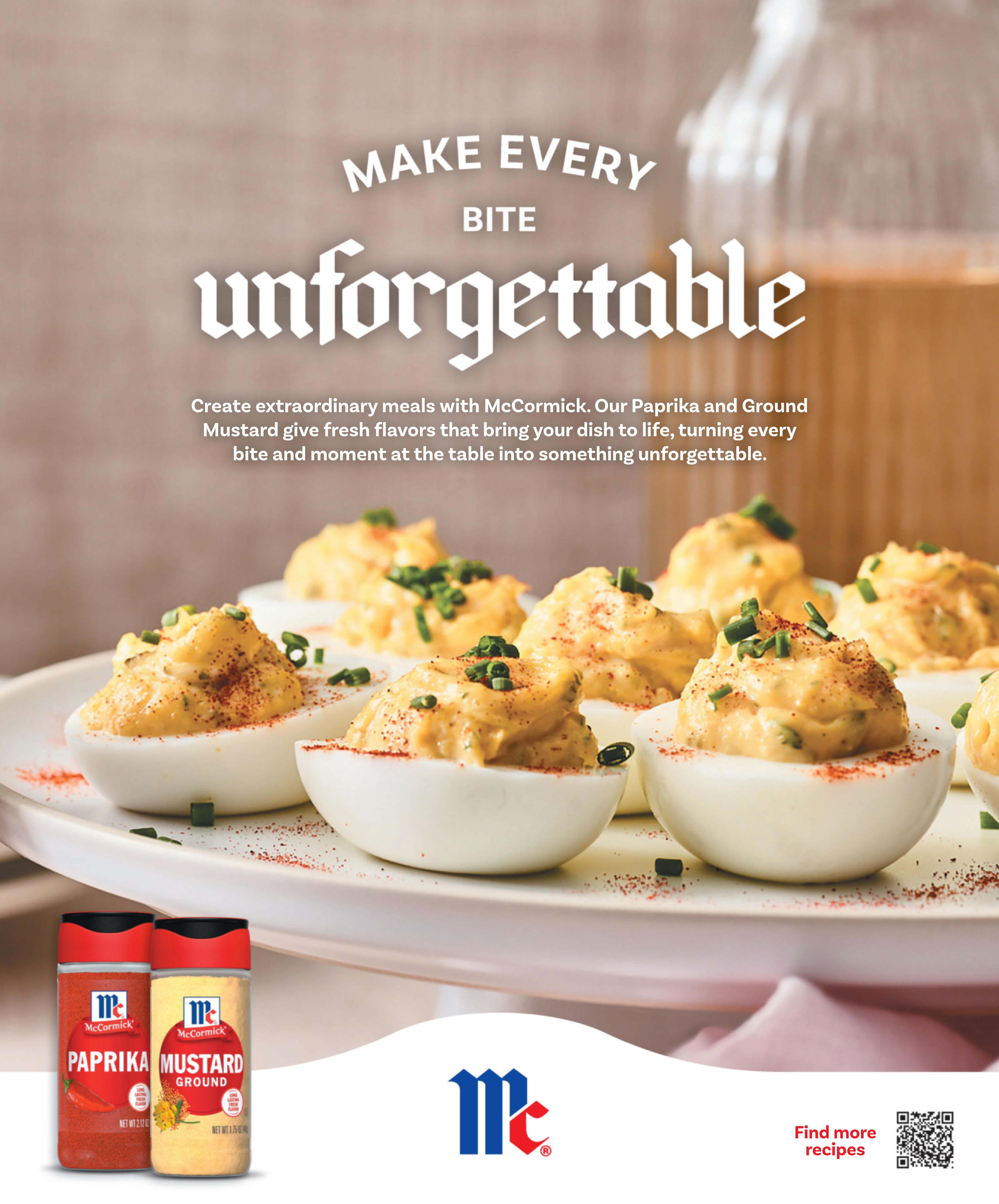
11. Heat the remaining 1 tsp. olive oil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the shallots and cook until they soften a bit, about 3 minutes. Pour the vinegar into the saucepan, bring to a lively simmer, and cook until the liquid has mostly reduced, about 5 minutes.

12. Add apricot preserves and the reserved pan drippings to the saucepan, whisk together, and bring to a simmer. Simmer for a few more minutes to concentrate the flavors and thicken it. Whisk in the reserved apricot butter, adding a little at a time while whisking to make a creamy, emulsified sauce.

13. Remove sauce from heat and season with salt and pepper to taste. Keep warm, then transfer to a sauceboat before serving. Carve chicken and arrange on a platter. Serve with the apricot sauce and garnish with fresh herbs, if using. Makes 6 servings.

PER SERVING *564 cal, 37 g fat (12 g sat fat), 139 mg chol, 526 mg sodium, 17 g carb, 2 g fiber, 11 g sugars, 41 g pro* ■

The savory pan juices are blended with a homemade apricot butter for a luxurious salty-sweet sauce to pass around the table.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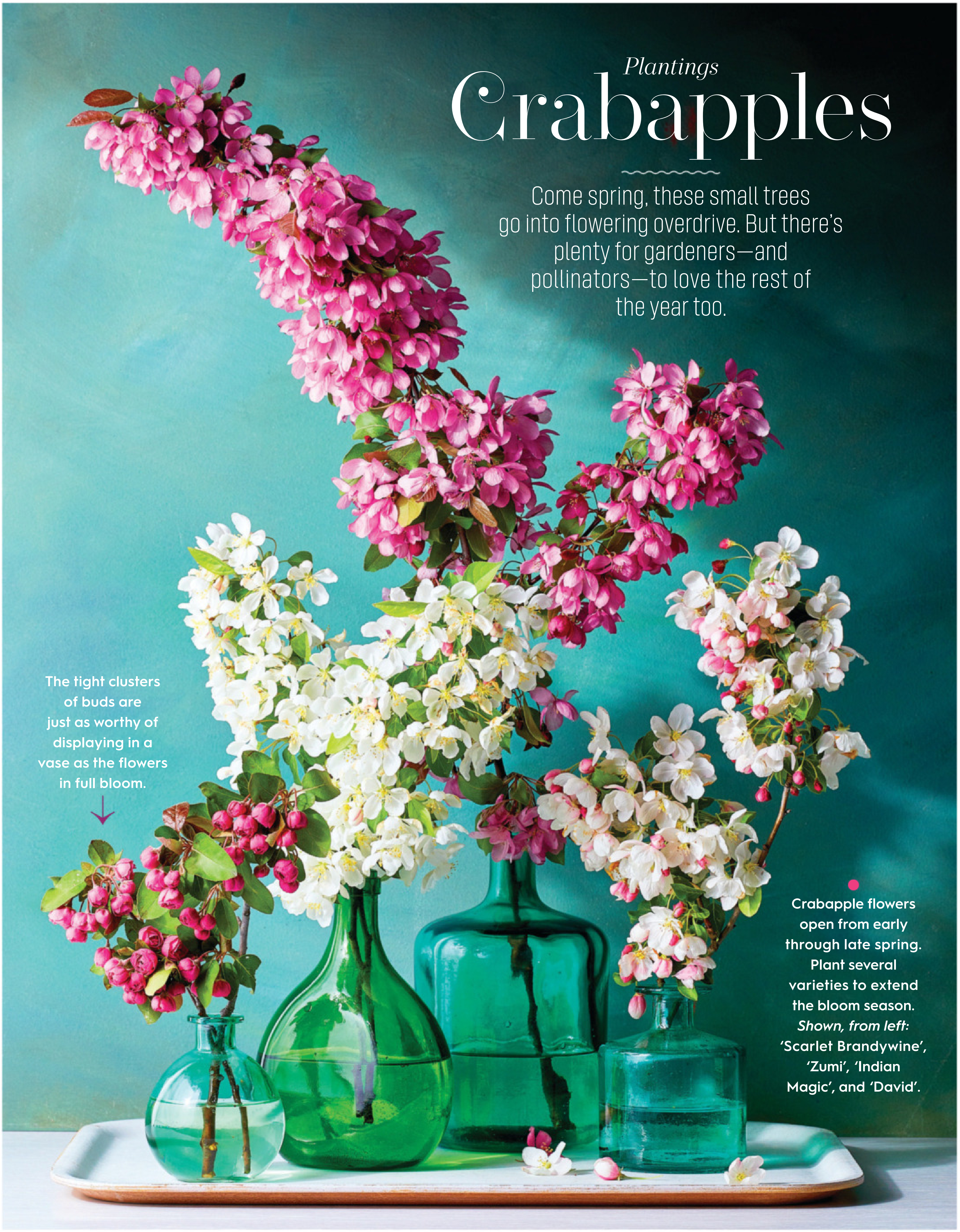

Plantings

Crabapples

Come spring, these small trees go into flowering overdrive. But there's plenty for gardeners—and pollinators—to love the rest of the year too.

The tight clusters of buds are just as worthy of displaying in a vase as the flowers in full bloom.

↓

Crabapple flowers open from early through late spring. Plant several varieties to extend the bloom season. ***Shown, from left:*** **'Scarlet Brandywine', 'Zumi', 'Indian Magic', and 'David'.**

by MARTY ROSS *photos* CARSON DOWNING *produced by* JARRET EINCK

can’t stop, won’t stop.

can’t stop, won’t stop.
can’t stop, won’t stop.
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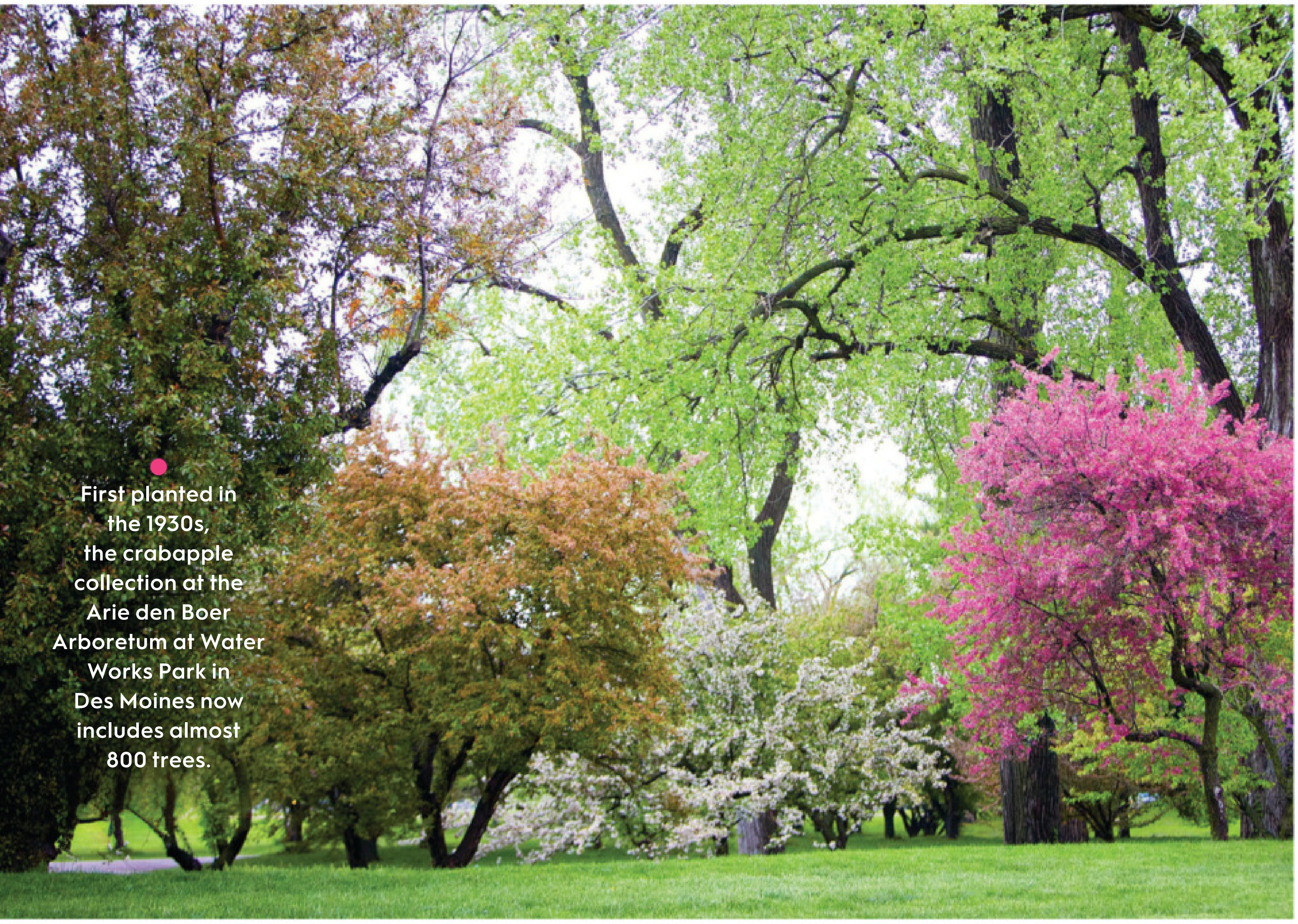


First planted in the 1930s, the crabapple collection at the Arie den Boer Arboretum at Water Works Park in Des Moines now includes almost 800 trees.

Crabapples bloom so prolifically in spring you almost can't see the branches. But these trees have other assets too, like glossy green, bronze, or purple-tinged foliage from summer into fall. The small autumn and winter fruit is too bitter to eat off the tree but is tasty in jams (or can be left on the tree for birds). And in the depths of winter, the trees' bare, twiggy branches provide a bit of architecture in gardens.

Where to Plant

It's easy to find a place in the garden for these relatively small trees. Plant a single crabapple as a sculptural specimen in a flowerbed or at the edge of a patio for a pool of shade. Crabapples also make effective privacy screens or can be trained into espalier forms against a wall. Dwarf crabapples thrive in pots.

Planting

Crabapples prefer sunny spots with well-drained soil. Plant from spring through early fall, preparing a hole no deeper than the tree's nursery pot and about twice as wide. Position the tree, refill the hole, and make a small berm around the edge of the hole to keep water from running off. Water well and spread a couple inches of organic mulch over the planting area.

Watering

If it doesn't rain, water newly planted trees once a week during the growing season for the first year or two. Established crabapples can tolerate drought.

Pests & Problems

Some older cultivars are susceptible to rust and aphids, but modern varieties are resistant to these problems, especially when planted in full sun and with good air circulation.

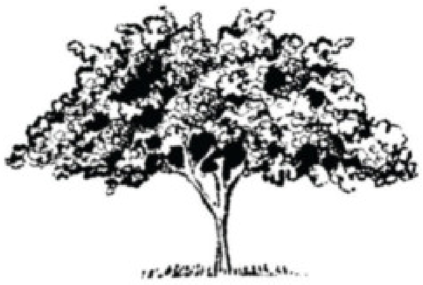
Pruning

Prune shoots from the tree's base as they appear. Light pruning to remove crossing branches or to shape a tree is easiest in winter, when you can see the tree's structure.

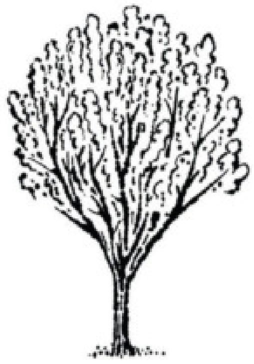
BY THE NUMBERS Most crabapples grow 15–25 feet tall. Dwarf varieties may be only 6 feet tall. Fruit ranges from pea-size to about 2 inches in diameter. The trees are hardy in Zones 4–8; some cultivars can weather winters in Zone 2.

Good Habits

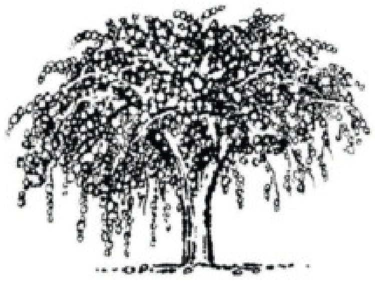
Crabapples come in many shapes, each contributing to a garden's architecture in a different way.



SPREADING
Where you need a screen or light shade, try crabapples with rounded or spreading crowns.



UPRIGHT
Upright crabapples with a V-shape crown fit in tight spaces. Their elegant symmetry complements classic garden styles.



WEEPING
Crabapples with cascading branches make dramatic stand-alone specimens.

ILLUSTRATIONS: EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM; PHOTOS: (APPLES) MARIO95/SHUTTERSTOCK, (ROBIN) MIRCEA COSTINA/SHUTTERSTOCK

SPRING FINERY

Early-flowering crabapples tend to have the longest bloom season, up to two weeks, but a small grove of two or three varieties will give you four to six weeks of color. Early-blooming varieties recommended by Jessica Barnett, horticulturist at the Arie den Boer Arboretum, include 'David', 'Dolgo', and 'Louisa'. Two long-blooming varieties she likes are 'Brandywine' and 'Prairifire'.

> "Crabapples are one of the easiest trees to grow. They're not needy. And when they burst with color in the spring, it's like a painting."
>
> —JESSICA BARNETT, *horticulturist, Arie den Boer Arboretum*

FOR THE BIRDS

Robins and other songbirds flock to crabapples in the fall and winter to eat the diminutive fruits (related to apples but bitter), which become soft after a frost. Birds also take shelter and nest in the branches of crabapples. The flowers are an important source of nectar for bees, butterflies, and moths. ■

BOUNTY OF BLOOMS

Crabapple flowers aren't known for their scent, although 'Sargent', 'Spring Snow' (a fruitless variety), and 'Brandywine' are considered pleasantly fragrant. 'Scarlet Brandywine', *above*, has ruffled double flowers with a slight fragrance and orange fruit in the fall.

CLEAN HOUSE AWARDS

Want to know our dirty secret? Our houses are a mess. But that's OK—we love to clean! We vacuumed, scrubbed, and spritzed our homes with 150+ new cleaning products to crown this year's 50 best.

laundry

RINSE, FLUFF, REPEAT

We churned out load after load to address a plethora of stains and smells.

STAIN FIGHTER

L'avant Collective High Performance Laundry Detergent
Beautiful inside and out—we were pleased by the bottle's good looks but even more delighted by the stain-erasing formula. $34

LIQUID DETERGENT

Mrs. Meyer's Ultra Concentrated
This testing favorite has it all: superb stain removal, a pleasant scent, and clean ingredients. One squeeze dispenses the right amount. $15

POWDER DETERGENT

Branch Basics Laundry Detergent
Unscented and hypoallergenic, one bag handles 90 loads. The enzymatic formula deep cleans, even in cold water. $39

SCENTED DETERGENT

DedCool Xtra Milk
The scent was the talk of the office. The fragrance brand's foray into detergent left clothes smelling like they were just spritzed with its signature fresh, musky bergamot perfume. $35

Wash Helpers

ECO PODS

Dropps 4-in-1 Plus Oxi Biobased Power Detergent
"Left laundry smelling really fresh, even my son's soccer socks!" says senior home editor Monika Eyers. 64/$22

LAUNDRY PODS

Gain Super Flings
One "fling" is the size of two standard pods; great for extra-large or stinky loads. One of the only pods that removed stains without pretreating. 45/$20

BOOSTER

Safely Laundry Boost
Brightens whites and colors plus adds a delightful citrus scent. Made with natural ingredients. $10

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY: MEGHAN HOLLORAN

by ELLA FIELD *photos* BRIE GOLDMAN *styling* MAGGIE GOLDSMITH

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cleaners

A SOLUTION FOR (ALMOST) EVERY SURFACE

What's your pain point? Bathrooms? Kitchen? Dishes? Whether you want to make the chore easier or you have an almost empty bottle and want to try something new, we've got you. Ready, set, clean!

1

DISH SOAP CONCENTRATE

Guests on Earth Dish Soap Concentrate Kit
One refill bag is equal to five bottles of detergent. $60

2

BATHROOM TOOL

Mr. Clean Magic Eraser Ultra Bath
The curved edges got into every nook and cranny and held up to bathroom grime. "It actually was magic," one tester said. 3/$6

3

SINK SPARKLER

Mrs. Meyer's Baking Soda Cream Cleaner
The thick, pastelike cleaner has grit to remove sludge like toothpaste, water buildup, and soap scum with ease. $6

4

MICROFIBER TOWELS

Member's Mark Microfiber Towels
Double-sided 16"x16" absorbent towels tackle any mess. Editor's tip: With 36 in the pack, they make a magnificent paper towel swap. Wrap them around your holder and use as usual. Wash and repeat. $16

5

DISH PODS

New & Improved Cascade Platinum Plus
We didn't think these dishwasher pods could get any better, but this upgraded formula proved us wrong. They received our Test Kitchen's stamp of approval. 47/$20

6

DUSTER

Bona High Performance Dusting System
Sturdy yet flexible, the wand extends up to 6 feet. (Ceiling fan dust bunnies, watch out!) Comes with a reusable duster head, a few disposable ones for extra-dusty situations, and a storage bag. $17

7

PREVENTIVE CLEANERS

SpotLess Bathroom Starter Kit
A few sprays on your toilet bowl, sink, and mirror add a protective layer that lets gunk slide right off. Thanks to its eco-friendly silicone technology, it completely eradicated that toilet bowl ring. 3/$19

8

BATHROOM SPRAY

Morton Pro Bathroom Cleaner
There aren't many bells and whistles with this spray, which is why our testers loved it. The nontoxic, salt-based formula is an uncomplicated workhorse. $7

9

KITCHEN CLEANER

Method All-Purpose Cleaner
Our pick for after-dinner counter cleanups and daily table spray-downs. $4

10

WINDOW AND GLASS CLEANER

Ayéya Glass & Mirror Tablets
Dissolve a tablet into a spray bottle

6
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5
7
MEYER'S CLEAN DAY
BAKING SODA CREAM CLEANER
Guests on Earth
Cascade PLATINUM PLUS
MORTON PRO BATHROOM CLEANER
method all-purpose cleaner
AYÉYA Glass & Mirror Cleaner
Clean Cult FOAMING TOILET BOWL CLEANER SHEETS

filled with water. Pros: streak-free windows and plastic-free packaging, plus the brand gives back to people in African communities. Cons: none! 2 tablets/$7

11

ECO TOILET CLEANER

Clean Cult Toilet Bowl Sheets

Toss one in your bowl, let it dissolve, and scrub. The sheet takes the guesswork out of how much cleaner to use. $7

12

KITCHEN TOWELS

Better Homes & Gardens™ Flat Woven Towels

These are large and super absorbent, plus the weave adds a grit that's great for scrubbing sticky messes. 2/$6

13

STAINLESS-STEEL CLEANER

Aunt Fannie's Stainless Steel Cleaner

The vinegar-based solution left fridges and sinks streak-free. $13

14

EVERYTHING CLEANER

Rosey by Thrive Market Castile Soap

Our testers liked that this use-it-anywhere cleaner does double-duty as a hand and dish soap, so you have one less thing next to your sink. $7

15

WIPES

Biom Mini Wipes Starter Kit

The all-purpose plant-powered wipes smell divine and easily remove stains. The 6"-tall refillable canister comes in five colors and is pretty enough to leave on the counter or desk, or in your car cup holder. $37 for the dispenser and two 40-count wipe refills

16

ECO DISH PODS

Nellie's Dish Cubed

16 plastic-free dishwasher pods neatly packed into a 3½"x3½" box. Rivals the cleaning power of non-eco products. $10

17

CONCENTRATE

Mean Green Refillable Ultra Powered Concentrate

Fill one side at the tap and the unique bottle creates the perfect solution. Refill as needed. One of the easiest concentrates we've used and deftly removed a stuck-on peanut butter mess. $9

18

DISH BRUSHES

The Brite by Scotch-Brite Countertop Collection

The magic of these beauties is in their handles. The dish brush holds soap, while the bottle brush stores a straw-cleaning tool—the little window ensures it can dry out. Also includes a sponge, two Swedish dishcloths, and a mesh scrubber. 6 pieces/$21

19

FOAMING DISH SOAP

Seventh Generation Free & Clear Foaming Dish Spray

An eco-friendly dish spray that helps reduce time and water. $6

20

SPONGE AND HOLDER

Curio Ionic Counter Sponge

An adhesive holder and magnetized sponge stick to your sink so it can dry out between uses. One side is soft and the other is coarse, but both are safe on pots, pans, and countertops. $25 for 3 and the holder

21

TOILET CLEANER

Clorox Foaming Toilet Bomb

Everything you know and love about Clorox toilet cleaner in the convenience of a bleach-free dissolvable puck. 5/$5

22

SCENTED DISH SOAP

Caldrea Dish Soap

"The smell was incredible. Felt like a hand soap experience for my dishes, and it removed the trickiest stuck-on food with great suds," one tester said. $16

Editor's Favorite

ALL-PURPOSE CLEANER

Grove Co. Ready to Use Multi-Purpose Cleaner

"I created tough messes to see how each product (plus a control of water) handled them. Of the 20-plus sprays, this one cut through the gunk with half the elbow grease—I'm giddy!" says copy editor Ella Field. "And aluminum packaging forever has my heart." $5

Hover your phone camera here for additional product details, testing notes, and links to buy our winning picks.

13
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21
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12
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18
20
22
Aunt Fannie's
STAINLESS STEEL CLEANER
Rosey
Castile Soap
Nellie's
DISH CUBED
MEAN GREEN
REFILLABLE
CLOROX
Foaming Toilet Bomb
Seventh Generation
CALDREA
ORANGE BLOSSOM BAMBOO

specialty tools

EXTRA OOMPH

Jump-start your deep-clean days with tools that tackle the tasks you may have been avoiding—or couldn't quite reach.

INDOOR/OUTDOOR MOTORIZED SCRUBBER
Casabella Power Spin Scrubber
The telescoping wand extends to nearly 4 feet and comes with four attachments. Our testers loved it for top-to-bottom bathroom cleaning and for walkways and siding. $50

STEAM CLEANER
Dirt Devil Handheld Steamer
Seven different attachment heads mean this steam cleaner works almost anywhere. Our favorite use? The oven. A large, spill-free tank saved us trips to the sink. $40

DETAIL BRUSH
Ryobi USB Detail Scrubber
"I sprayed my grout with a little cleaner and let this do the hard work for me. I felt like a grout dental hygienist and loved every second," says Lauren Bengtson, senior market editor. "It worked just as well on hard-water stains as it did on soap scum." $40

Tidy up in all those tight spaces—tub seals, sink drains, car vents—or spiff up a pair of muddy sneakers.

Fabric Care

STEAMER/IRON
Rowenta Pure Force 3-in-1
Transition from steaming to ironing seamlessly—and without drips. Features an XL water tank, 8½-foot cord, and a reversible lint-removing pad. $80

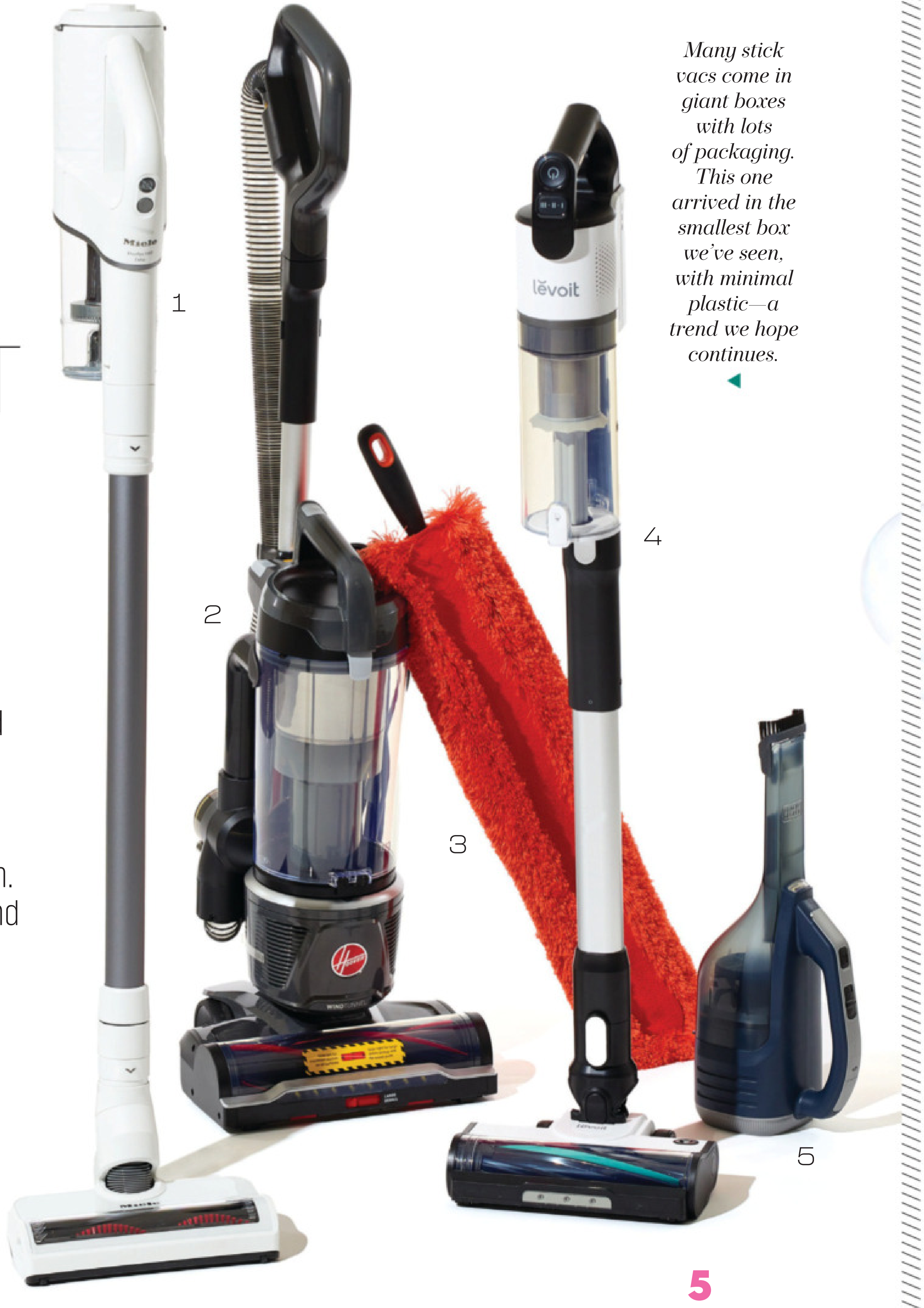
SUEDE CLEANER
Leather Honey Suede & Nubuck Cleaner
The foaming solution is easy to use and made sneakers, Uggs, and other leather-based fabrics look brand-new. $14

DEPILLER
Gleener Sweater Saver
Small, slim, and mighty. Battery-free but powerful. A few brushes will spruce up any sweater, and it's the perfect travel companion. $7

floors

SWEPT OFF OUR FEET

We do recommend these tools that got our floors so clean we could almost eat off them. We *don't* recommend actually eating off the floor. (Ew.)



Many stick vacs come in giant boxes with lots of packaging. This one arrived in the smallest box we've seen, with minimal plastic—a trend we hope continues.

1

BEST SUCTION

Miele Duoflex HX1 Extra
"This tiny vac sucks—in the best way!" says senior executive editor Oma Ford. "It picked up not just the usual dirt, but so, so, so much dust (an embarrassing amount, really). Bonus: It's small and good-looking." $599

2

UPRIGHT VAC

Hoover WindTunnel Tangle Guard
The biggest challenge with upright vacuums is their maneuverability. This one helps solve that problem. A detachable handle turns this into a stick vac with the power of an upright so you can get in hard-to-reach places like stairs and baseboards. $200

3

APPLIANCE DUSTER

OXO Under Appliance Duster
We've avoided these spaces long enough: Time to get under the fridge, stove, cabinets, and radiators with this tool. The microfiber head can be thrown in the wash and reused. $17

4

BUDGET STICK VAC

Levoit LVAC 200
This was just a quarter of the price of some stick vacs we tested but had some of the best suction. Straightforward in the best way. $200

5

HAND VAC

Black + Decker Dustbuster Reveal
This is the first hand vac we've tested with an LED light, and now we can't go back. That, plus the generous-size canister, makes this handy tool perfect for daily pickups. $60

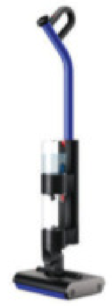
Top Mops

ROBO VAC/MOP

Dreame X50 Ultra
The tech features were smarter and the cleaning was more powerful than other bots. And it was surprisingly easy to use (with or without the app). With a self-cleaning mop, ability to climb over some obstacles, and auto-emptying for up to 100 days. $1,699

MOP

Rejuvenate Click n Clean with PowerMax
Washable pads make it an eco-friendly swap for disposable-pad mops. The cleaner's upgraded formula made quick work of tough messes. $30



WET FLOOR CLEANER

Dyson WashG1
Testers raved about its slimness, the effective self-cleaning mode, and the ease of use from setup to cleanup. $700

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WHOLE BODY DEODORANT
Clinically Proven Odor Protection
notes of Peach + Vanilla Blossom
Aluminum Free Body Spray
Aluminum Free Invisible Cream
Aluminum Free Dry Solid
72HR
ODOR PROTECTION
PITS + BITS
Secret
WHOLE BODY DEODORANT
SCAN TO BUY
Hover phone camera over code

CLEAN HOUSE AWARDS

pet messes

MORE BELLY RUBBING, LESS SCRUBBING

Pet parents know: Removing stains, odors, and fur is part of the job. But it doesn't have to be a grind. These winners prove that.

UPHOLSTERY CLEANER

Carbona Upholstery Cleaner

Squeeze the bottle to dispense the solution through the attached brush and scrub away any stains. $10

ODOR REMOVER

Norwex Pet Stain & Odour Remover

The concentrated solution has enzymes and probiotics that are formulated to break down proteins in pet waste. $33

LINT ROLLER

Mini ChomChom Roller

A compact version of our favorite pet-hair remover is the perfect size to get all that pesky fur off your clothes. The best part? No waste! $25

Squeaky-Clean Floors

PET VACUUM

Tineco Go Pet Stick Vacuum

"It sucks up small dog kibble easily," says senior home editor Kathy Barnes. "Even better: Hair doesn't get caught in the head." $250

SPOT CLEANER

Bissell Little Green Pet Pro Portable Carpet Cleaner

Our go-to spot cleaner got an upgrade with an XL water tank. $160

CARPET CLEANER

Shark CarpetXpert HairPro Pet with StainStriker

A high-power carpet cleaner with a built-in hose that works as a spot cleaner. Comes with four attachments. $370 ■

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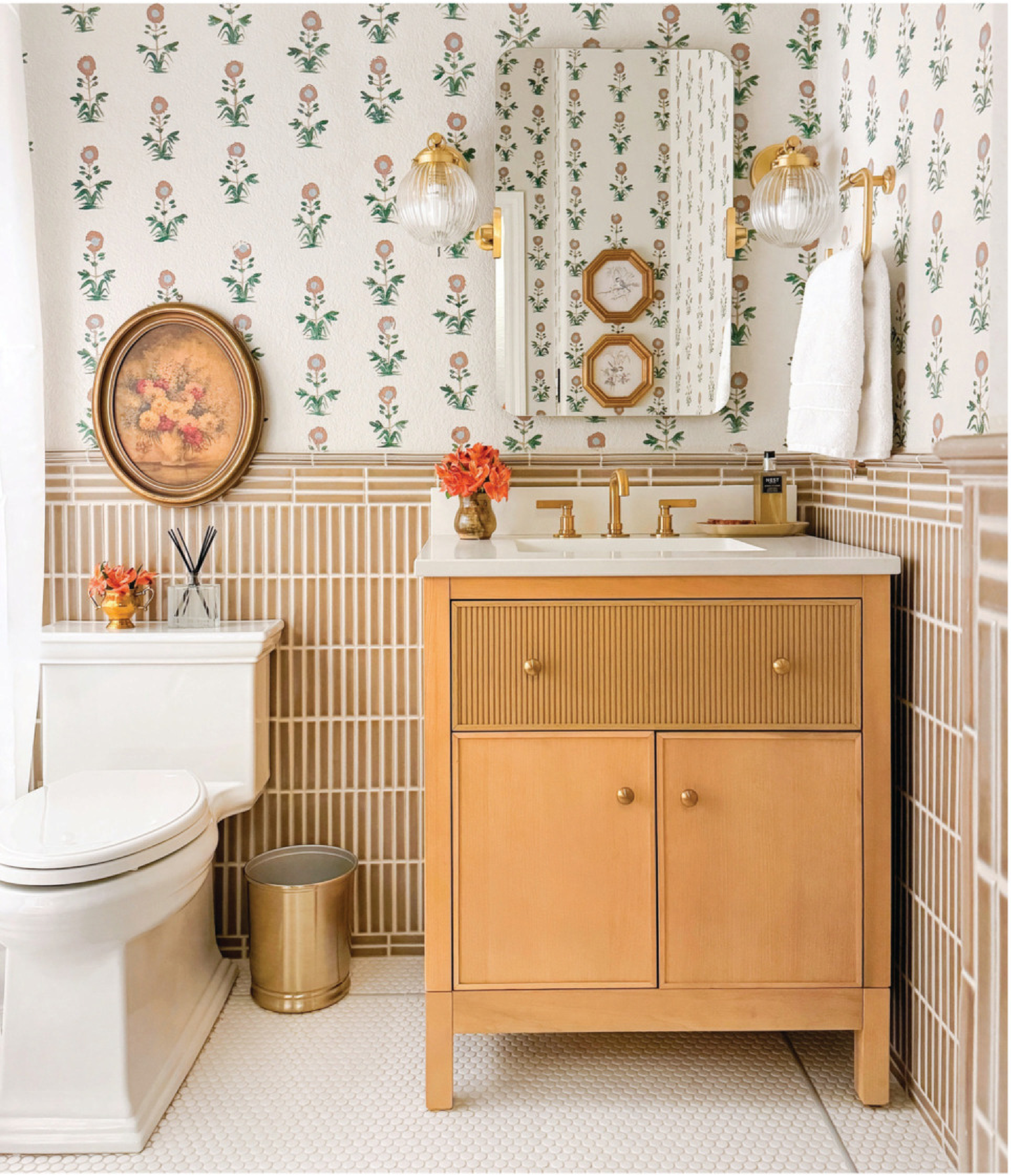
I Did It!

This creative homeowner gave her basic bath a cosmetic glow-up with tile, fixtures, and a **painted flower garden** on the walls.



Self-taught DIYer Fariha Nasir has been upgrading her basic builder home into a custom dream, one project at a time. She called on her heritage when she painted a field of block print-style florals on the walls. "I identify so much with block printing. I grew up in those markets," she says of the street fairs in her native Pakistan where the carved blocks are sold. After the paint dried, Fariha (Instagram @pennies_for_a_fortune) moved on to a wainscot and floors from Fireclay Tile. The demo was "exhilarating," but she soon became frustrated with the installation and hired a pro. "I think it's OK and important to know when you've met your match." New Kohler fixtures finish the cottage look. "People ask me if I'm ever going to be done with this house, and I don't think so. There's so much more to learn."

Time About 12 hours over a week to paint the flowers

Cost $40 for five paint samples, plus supplies

Skills Basic painting and the ability to use a laser level

by KATHY BARNES *photos* FARIHA NASIR

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in your backyard

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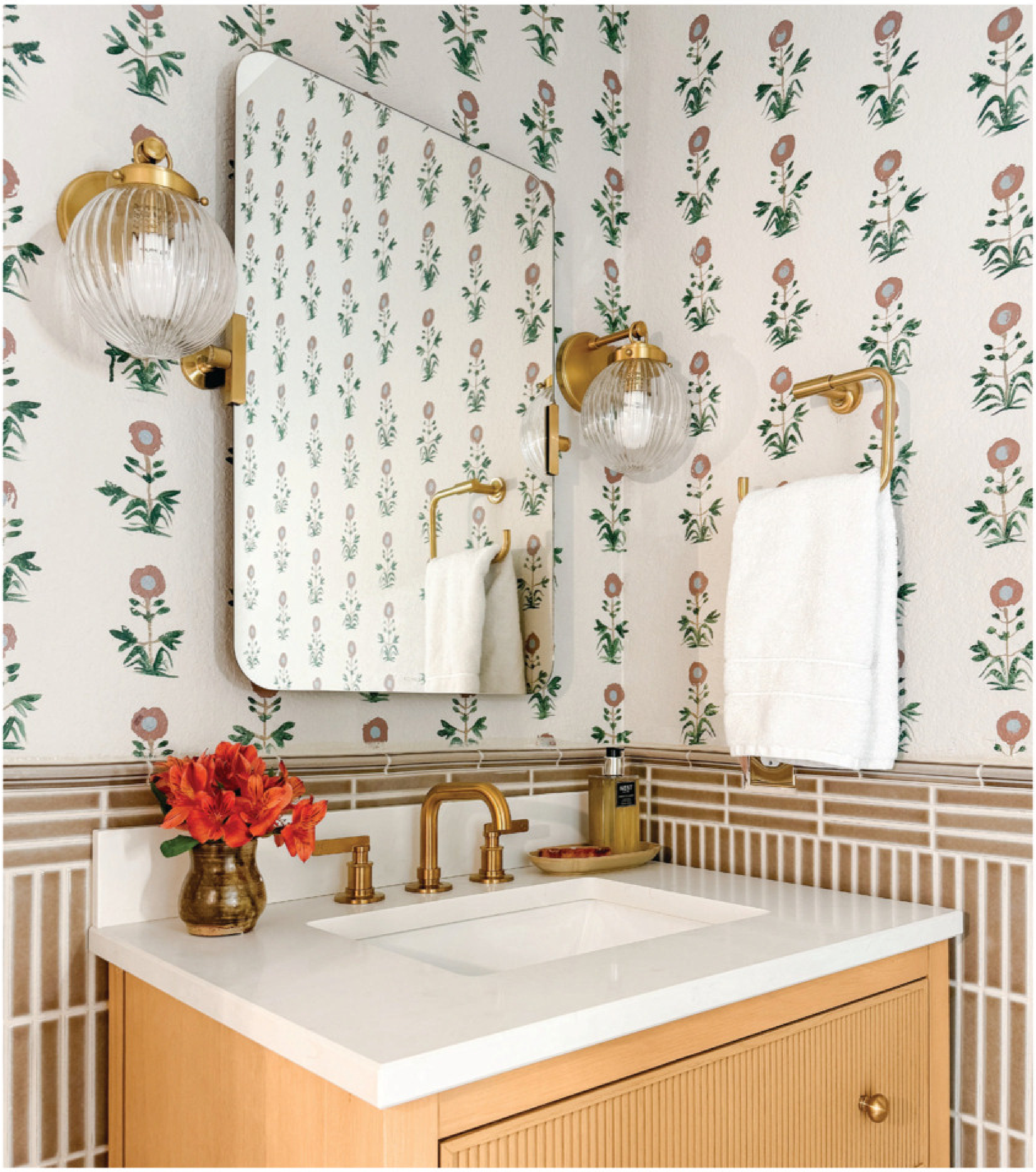
What She Did

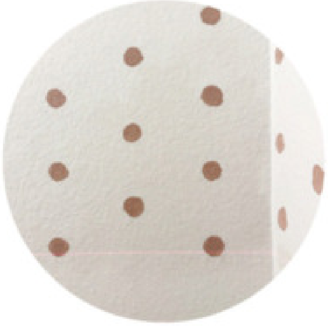
Fariha first doodled the design and cut it into a flexible stencil using a Cricut machine. But along the way, she found her stenciling looked messy, so she went freehand instead. "It's OK to change directions," she says.



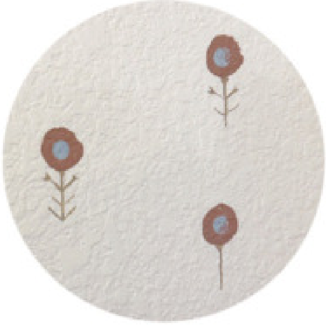
Fariha bought her first power tool, a miter saw, on Facebook Marketplace seven years ago. She wanted to flex her creativity but says she felt intimidated, even scared, of power tools. In a few short years, she conquered that fear and landed a home makeover show called *Problem Spaces* on Magnolia Network. She also recently partnered with Chasing Paper to bring her block print wallcovering designs to the mass market.

How-To

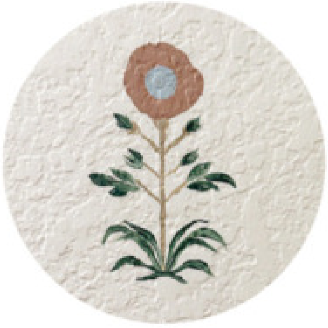
Here's how Fariha painted her flowers. First step: any wall repairs and a fresh base coat in a satin or eggshell finish.



PATTERN PLAN
With a laser level, plot the design. Fariha used a round foam brush with a stippling edge to create circles.



LINES AND CIRCLES
She used a fine brush to draw stems and offshoots. She then used a smaller round brush to create the flower centers.



DETAILS
She added an artful flourish at the end of each offshoot and a few lines at the base of the stem for foliage. ■

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True ROMANCE

THIS FRESH TAKE ON THE COTTAGE GARDEN OFFERS SMART LESSONS FOR MAKING THE CLASSIC STYLE YOUR OWN.

No. 1

MAKE A STORYBOOK ENTRANCE

Cottage garden style is all about maxing out on flowers, a tenet that Tracie Fish happily applied to her Washington State garden. The pathway leading up to it is lined with billowing layers of lady's mantle, purple columbine, lavender, and 'Sarah Bernhardt' peonies. To provide structure and "contain the chaos," as Tracie puts it, she installed formal boxwoods and hardy 'Polar Joy' rose trees. Her favorite rose, *this page,* is a newer variety from David Austin Roses called 'Olivia', which combines disease resistance with frilly, fragrant flowers.

Crushed gravel is a smart, permeable choice for a pathway and sounds lovely underfoot.

by TERESA WOODARD *photos* LAURIE BLACK

Pristine & perfect? *No, thank you.*

Washington State gardener Tracie Fish has long championed a more relaxed, authentic approach, filling her cottage-style garden with nostalgic plants, rusted flea market finds, and moss-covered flagstone paths.

"Our garden has been a labor of love, evolving over time with lots of trial and error," Tracie says. "It became this cozy, joyful bit of chaos."

Tracie's passion for cottage-style gardening began in her 20s. A single mom living in her first apartment, she packed her small patio with old-fashioned annuals and climbing roses. Years later, when she moved into a new home in Bothell, WA, with her husband, Darin, she saw a chance to transform the bare landscape into a wistful, flower-filled haven.

She began with the structures: a picket fence, a few metal arches, and a chicken coop built from the salvaged timbers of an old church. From there, she layered on fragrant vintage roses, peonies, and lavender, plus annuals like columbine and alyssum over the years. As plants self-seeded or spilled over paths, she let them be. The result is a space that evokes classic cottage gardens with its freewheeling abundance of old-fashioned flowers but is full of surprises too.

No. 2

CREATE TRANSITIONS

Amid the profusion of plants, Tracie found ways to make each part of the garden feel like a distinct space. Archways are positioned to act as doorways, while varying the materials underfoot—gravel, flagstone, grass—delineates each space.

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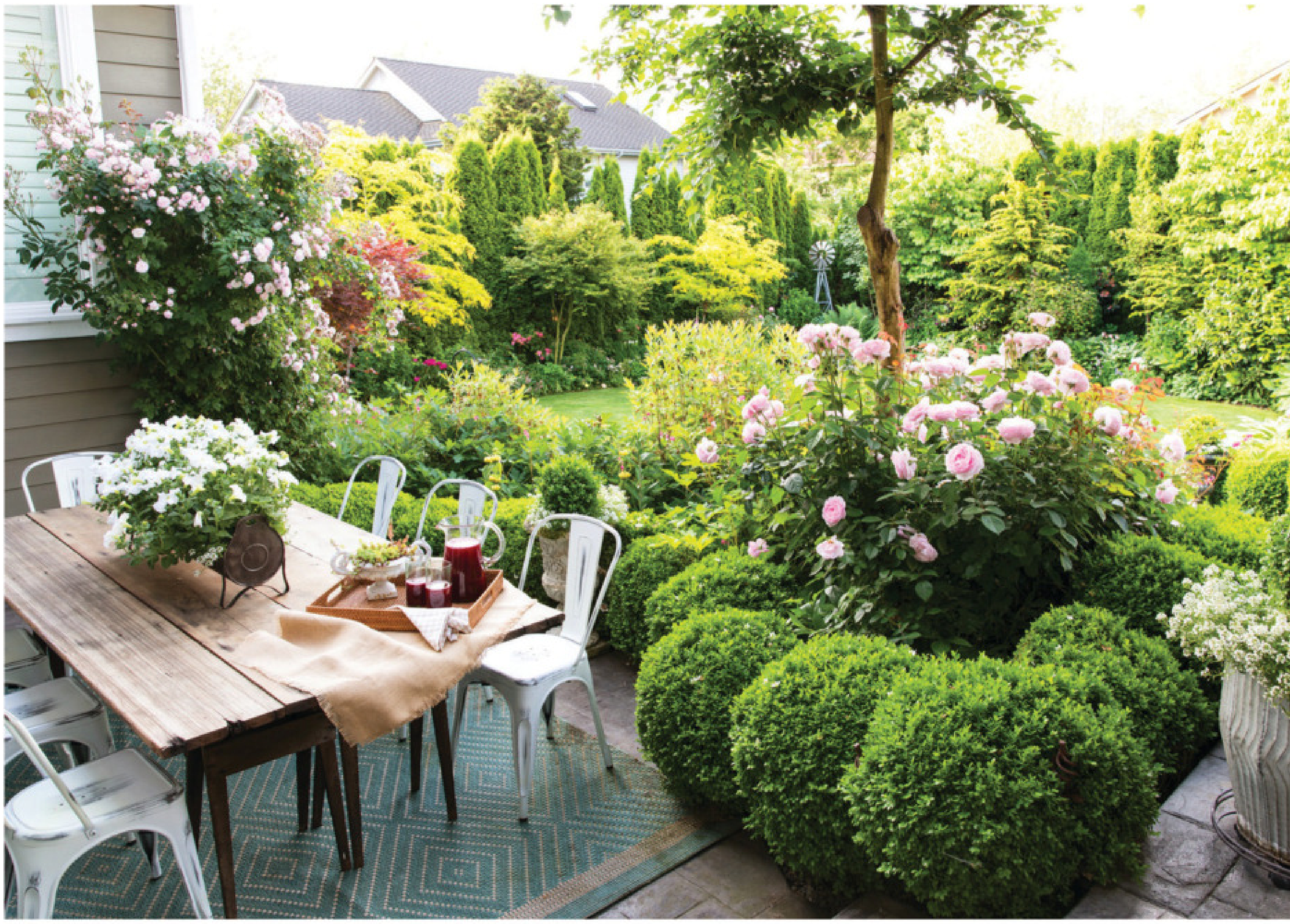
Tracie built a chicken coop out of salvaged wood for her flock of hens.

> "YOU WANT GARDEN PATHS THAT DRAW YOU IN AND DON'T REVEAL EVERYTHING AT ONCE. I LOVE WHEN YOU TURN A CORNER IN THE LANDSCAPE TO FIND THE UNEXPECTED."
>
> —TRACIE FISH, *homeowner*

No. 3

LET LOOSE

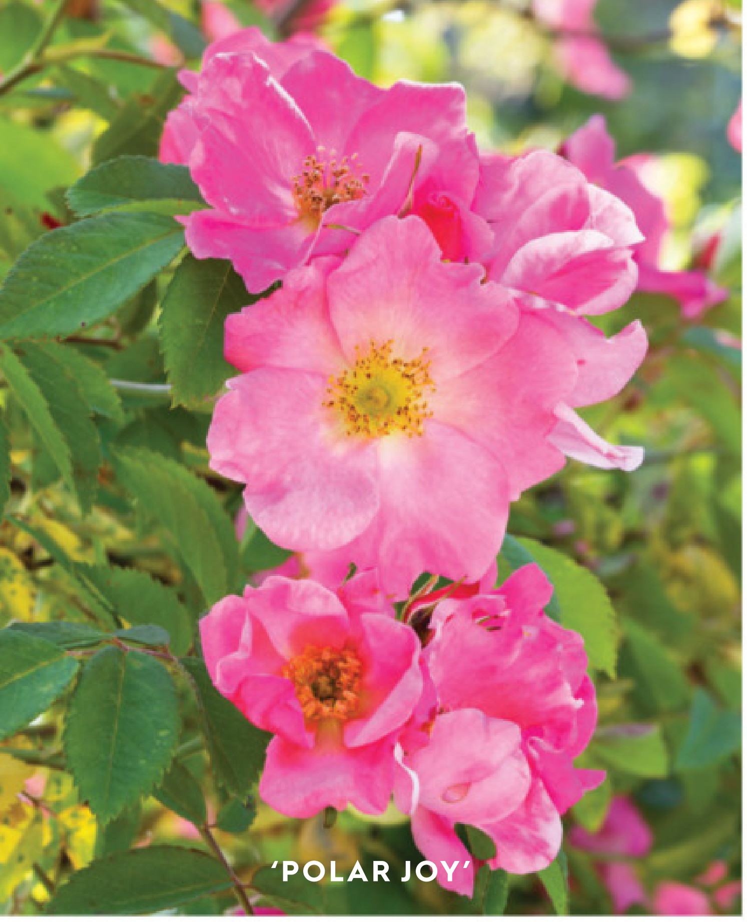
Tracie delights in planting self-sowing annuals like alyssums, cosmos, and larkspurs that drop their seeds to later emerge in random places throughout the garden. Case in point: a pathway, *left,* where columbines have popped up in ever-increasing numbers each year. "Nature has its own art, so let it be," Tracie says.



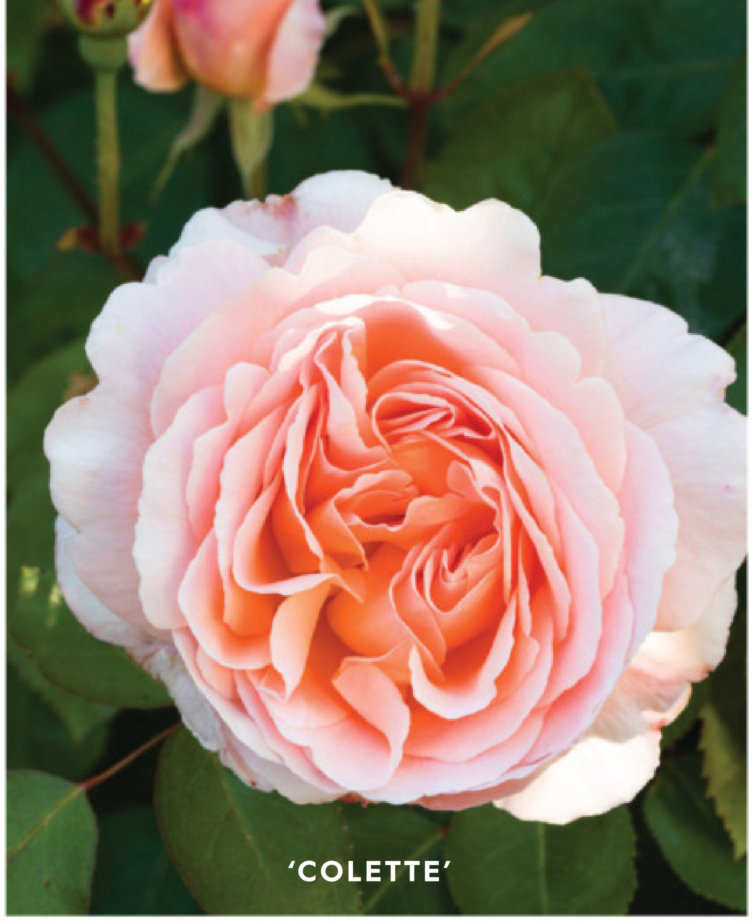
No. 4

CREATE BREATHING ROOM

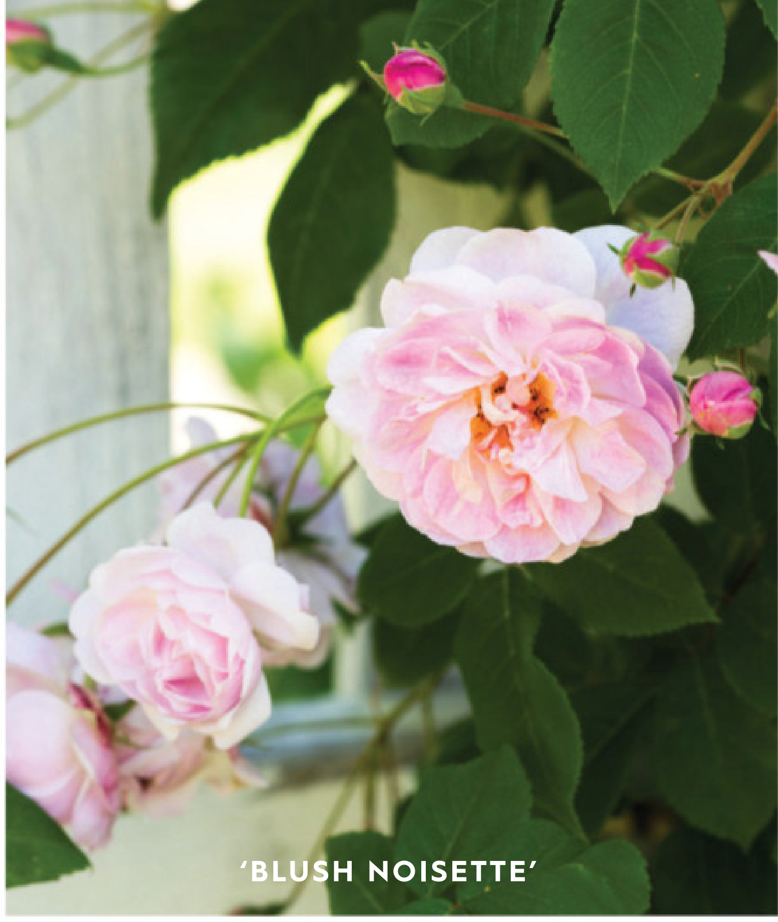
The back patio was thoughtfully built to capture views of the lawn and its perennial borders but was also framed with orbs of boxwoods to make it feel like an enclosed garden room of its own. For a rustic-modern look, Tracie outfitted the area with sleek-but-aged metal café chairs around a wood-plank dining table.



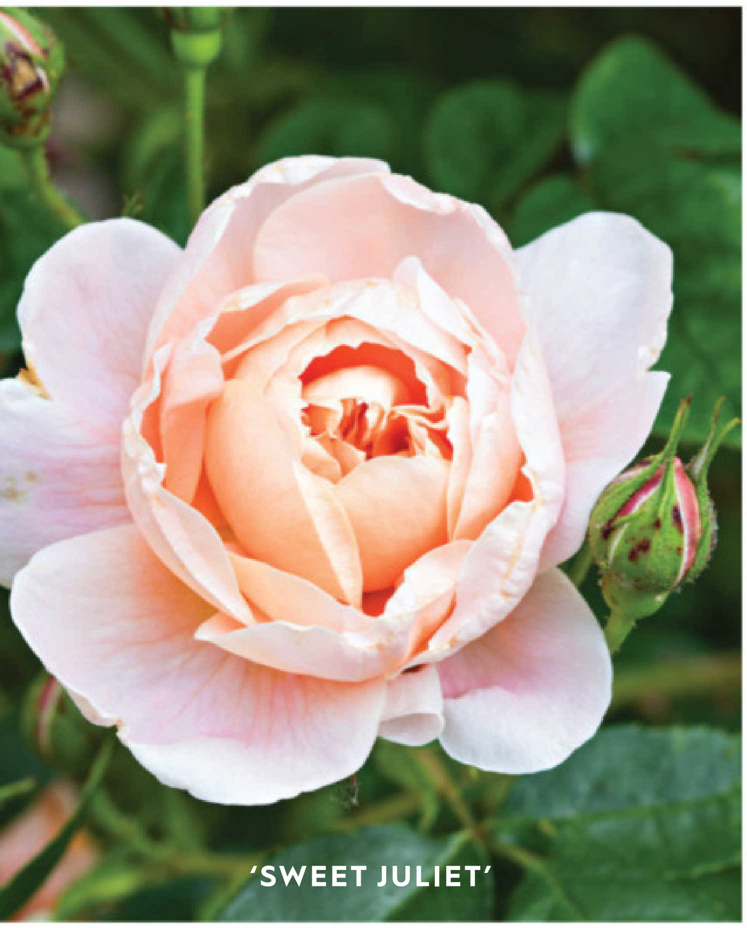
‘POLAR JOY’



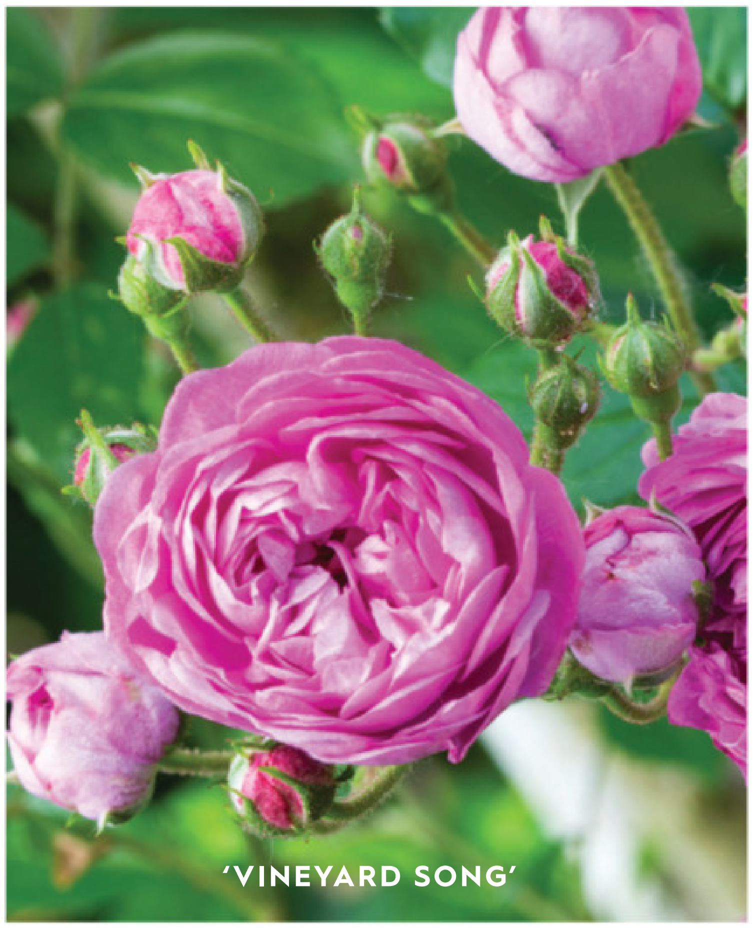
‘COLETTE’



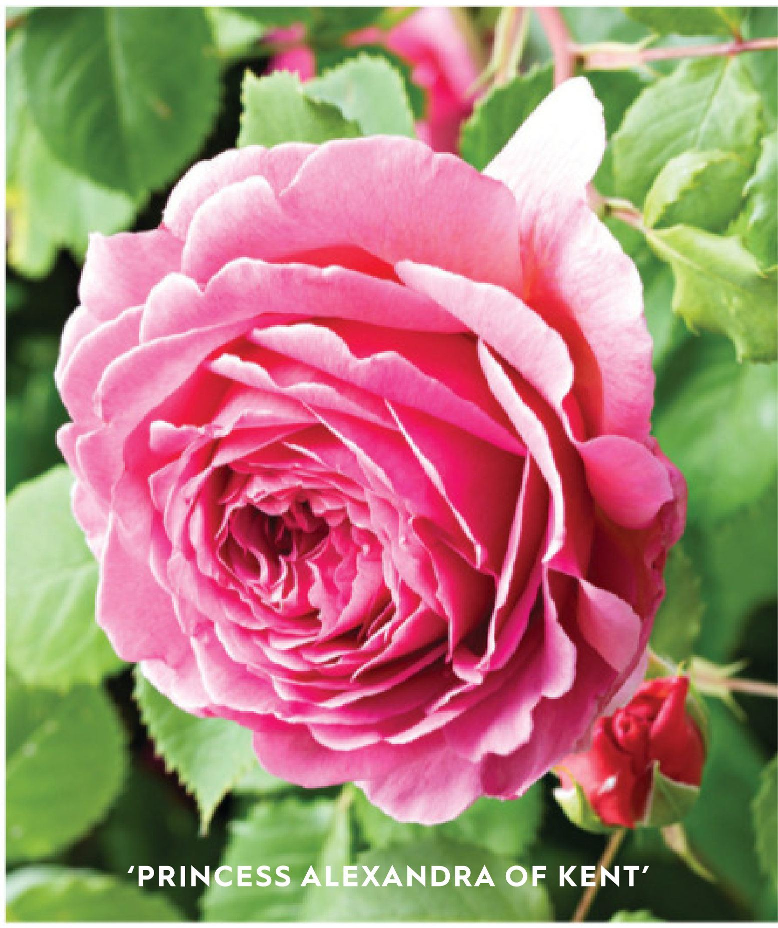
‘BLUSH NOISETTE’



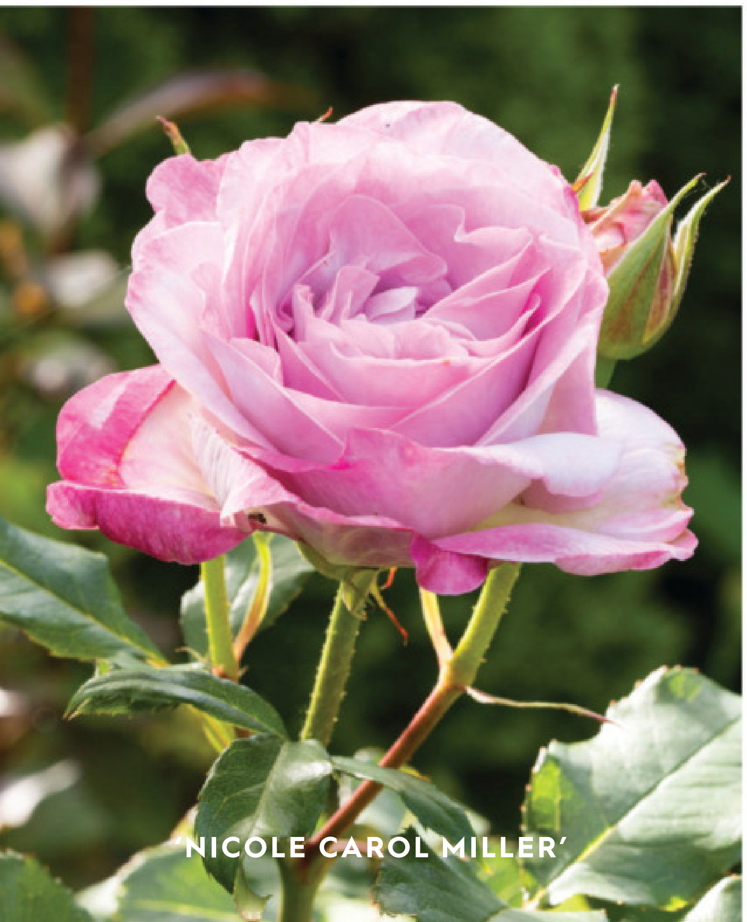
‘SWEET JULIET’



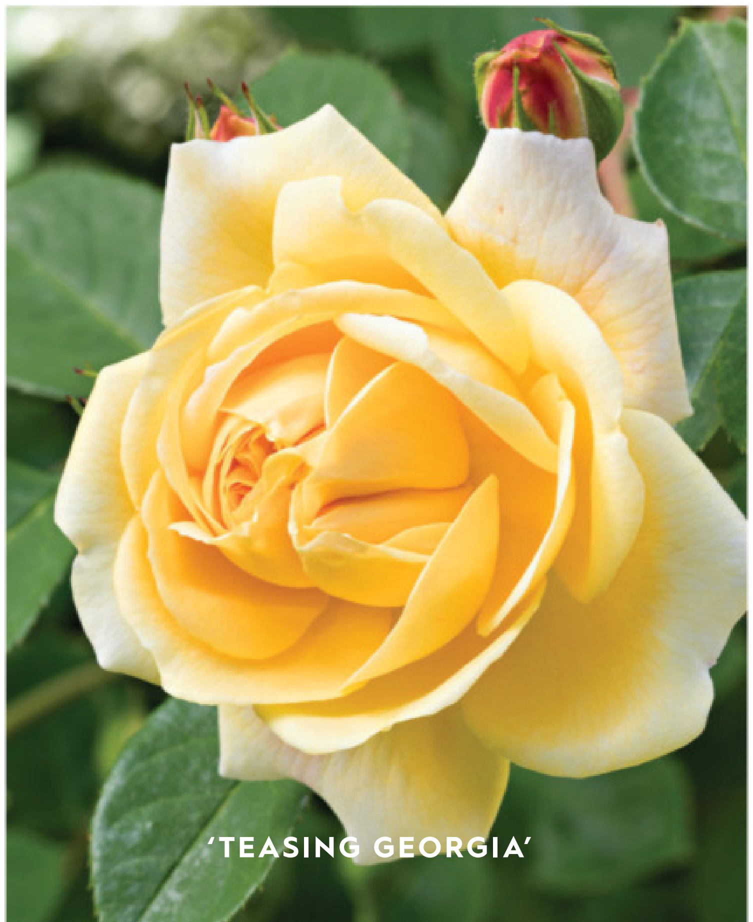
‘VINEYARD SONG’



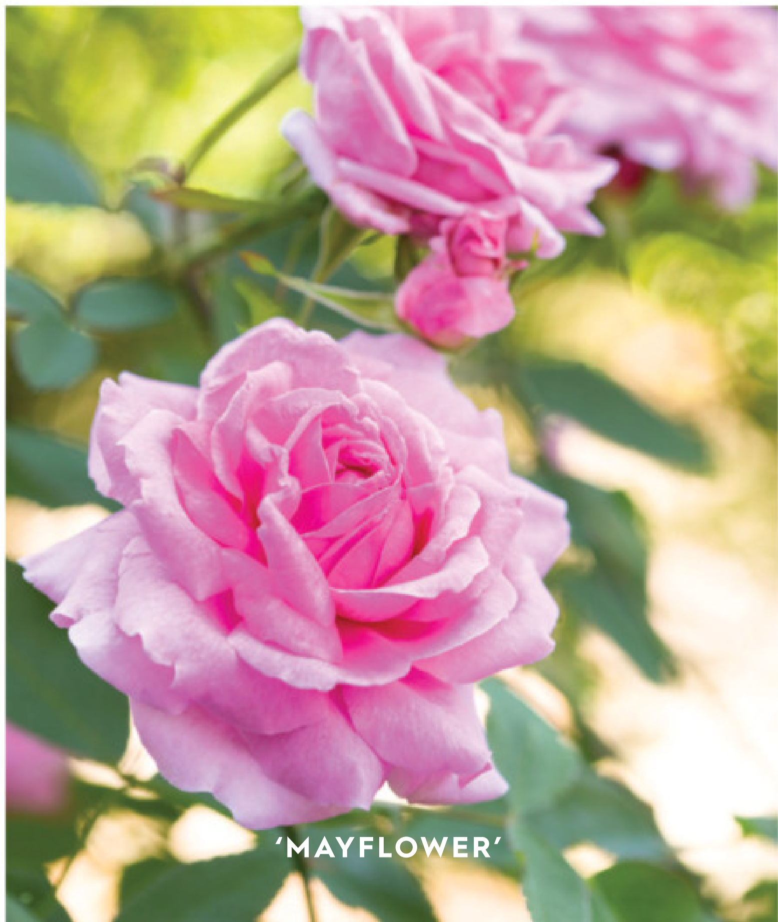
‘PRINCESS ALEXANDRA OF KENT’



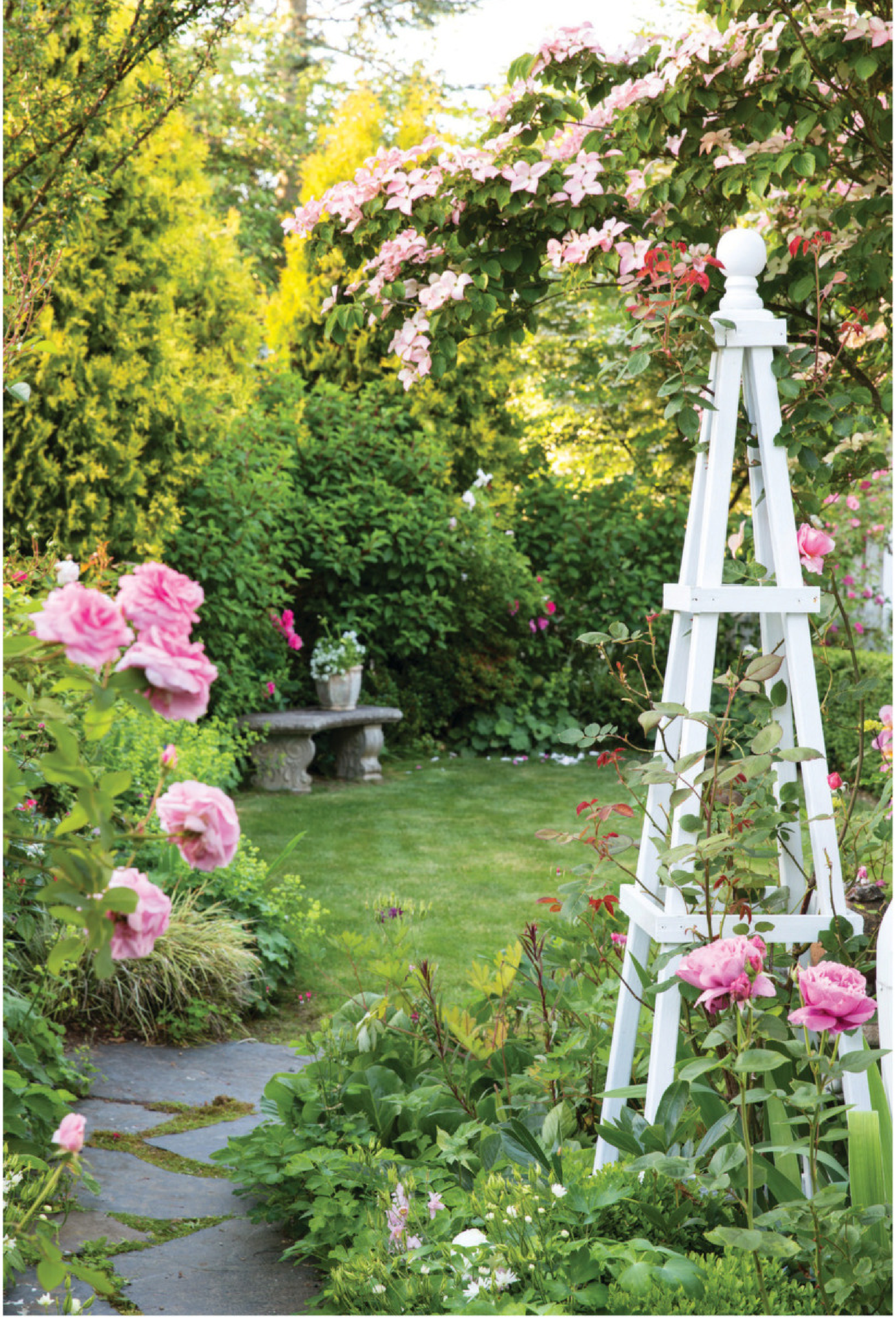
NICOLE CAROL MILLER’



‘TEASING GEORGIA’



‘MAYFLOWER’



No. 5

COMBINE OLD & NEW

For maximum fragrance and petal count, Tracie planted both antique rose varieties and vintage-style modern hybrids, *left,* that are bred to be more resilient. You can source old-time favorites from local plant sales or online sources like *antiqueroseemporium.com.* For antique-looking roses with modern-day performance, hit the nursery. Try plants from David Austin Roses, Proven Winners' 'Reminiscent' series, or Monrovia's 'Eau de Parfum' series.

No. 6

BUILD VERTICAL INTEREST

Use tuteurs (French for "support") to add height and drama to borders. The pyramid-shape structures can support plants like climbing roses and clematis—and give you something to look at when flowers aren't blooming. Tracie opted for classic white, but you can find tuteurs in metal or rustic wood, or even paint them to personalize their look.

No. 8

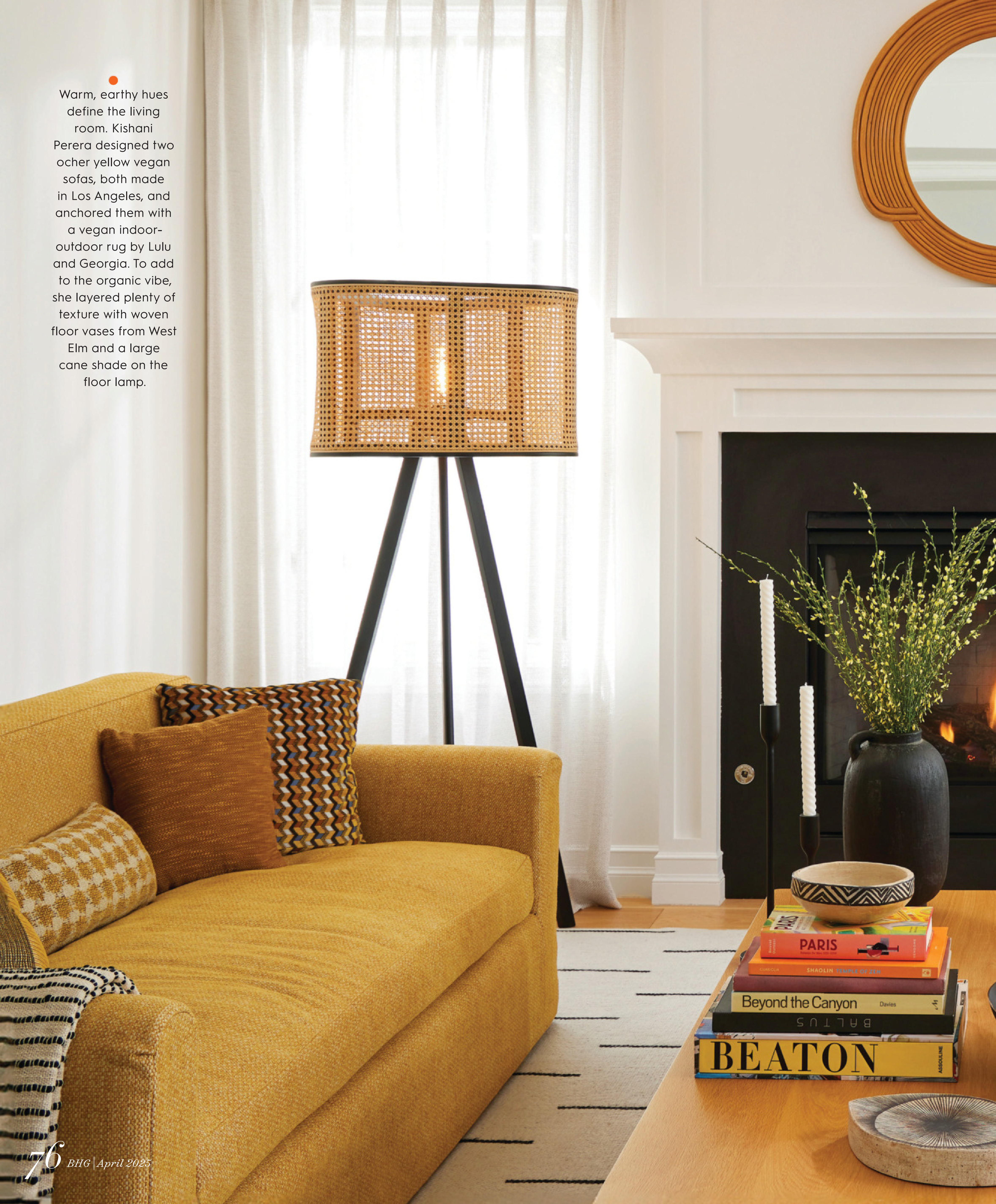
CURATE VINTAGE FINDS

While Tracie loves the aged look that flea market treasures bring to the garden, she exercised restraint in her own space, opting for a few select timeworn birdhouses and chipped cement planters. "There is a difference between focal points in the landscape and clutter," she says. ■

No. 7

ALLOW FOR VISUAL BREAKS

Throughout the yard, Tracie used green and white to provide a calming respite from the colorful flowers. Alongside a classic white picket fence, a path of green boxwoods and white columbines leads to the next exuberant scene in the garden.

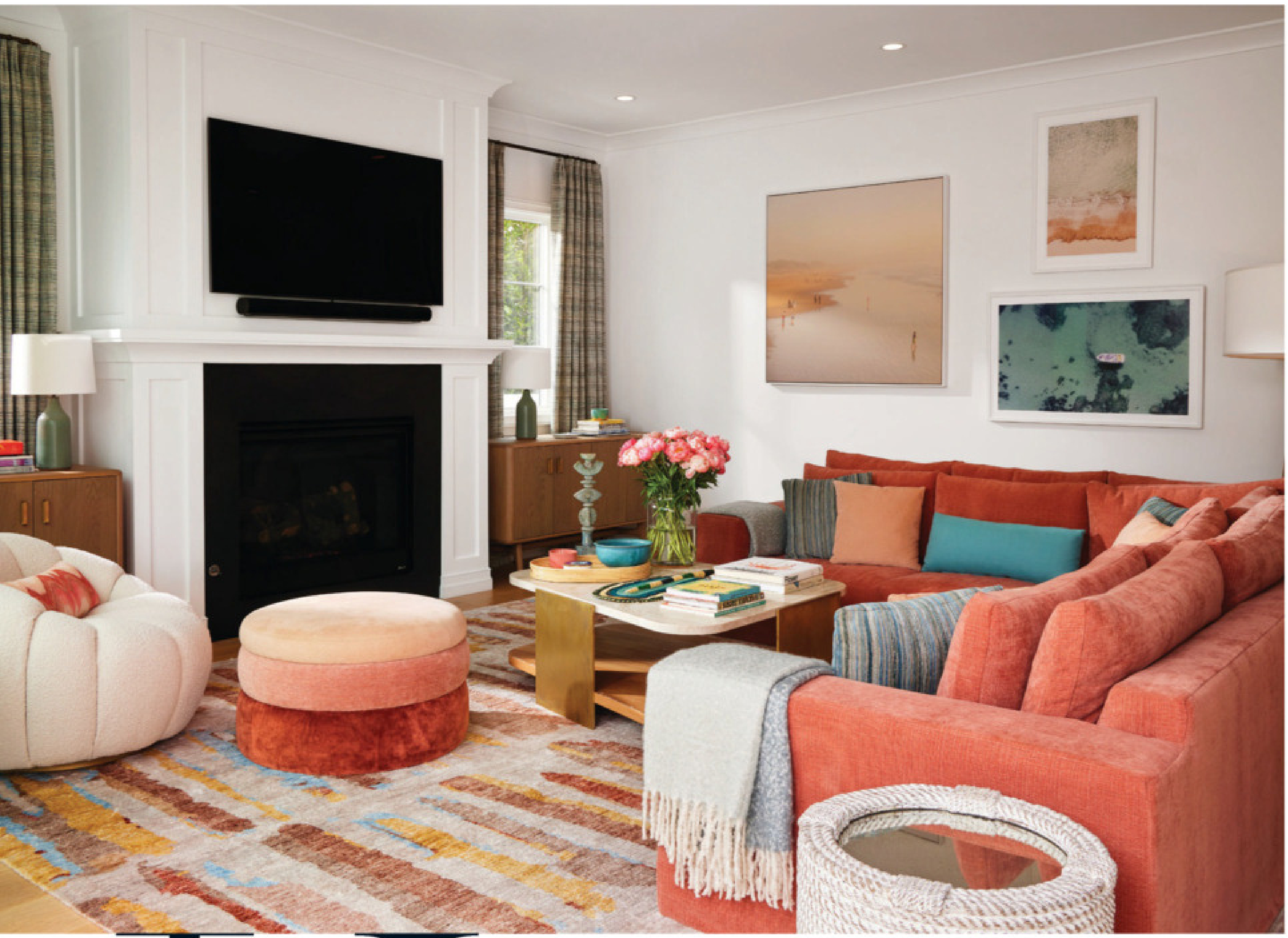

PARIS
SHAOLIN
Beyond the Canyon
Davies
BALTUS
BEATON
ASSOULINE

Warm, earthy hues define the living room. Kishani Perera designed two ocher yellow vegan sofas, both made in Los Angeles, and anchored them with a vegan indoor-outdoor rug by Lulu and Georgia. To add to the organic vibe, she layered plenty of texture with woven floor vases from West Elm and a large cane shade on the floor lamp.

Natural Good LOOKS

You've heard of a vegan diet, but how about vegan interior design? Find out what it means—and see how inviting it can look—in an L.A. home decorated by Kishani Perera.

by PAIGE PORTER FISCHER *photos* NOAH WEBB *styling* KISHANI PERERA



Kishani Perera has made a career out of designing environmentally healthy homes that are good to live in and to look at. The California designer, who herself practiced veganism for decades, considers reading the "ingredients" lists for paint, textiles, furniture, and finishes as important as reading the labels on foods.

So when she set out to design this new Los Angeles home for an eco-conscious family, she studied every word on every label of every piece she brought in so that her clients could be sure their house is 100-percent vegan. "Something may look good from the outside, and then you'll discover wool strapping on a sofa or a milk product in a paint color," Perera says. "It was my job to be thorough and not miss a single surprising detail."

It was also her mission to infuse the formerly bland spec house with the vibrancy her clients desired. "They are absolutely obsessed with color," Perera says. "They were imagining a house that was whimsical and full of bright, fun colors. Ten or so years ago, it was difficult to find anything vegan that wasn't boring and beige. But fortunately, times have changed and our options are so much better."

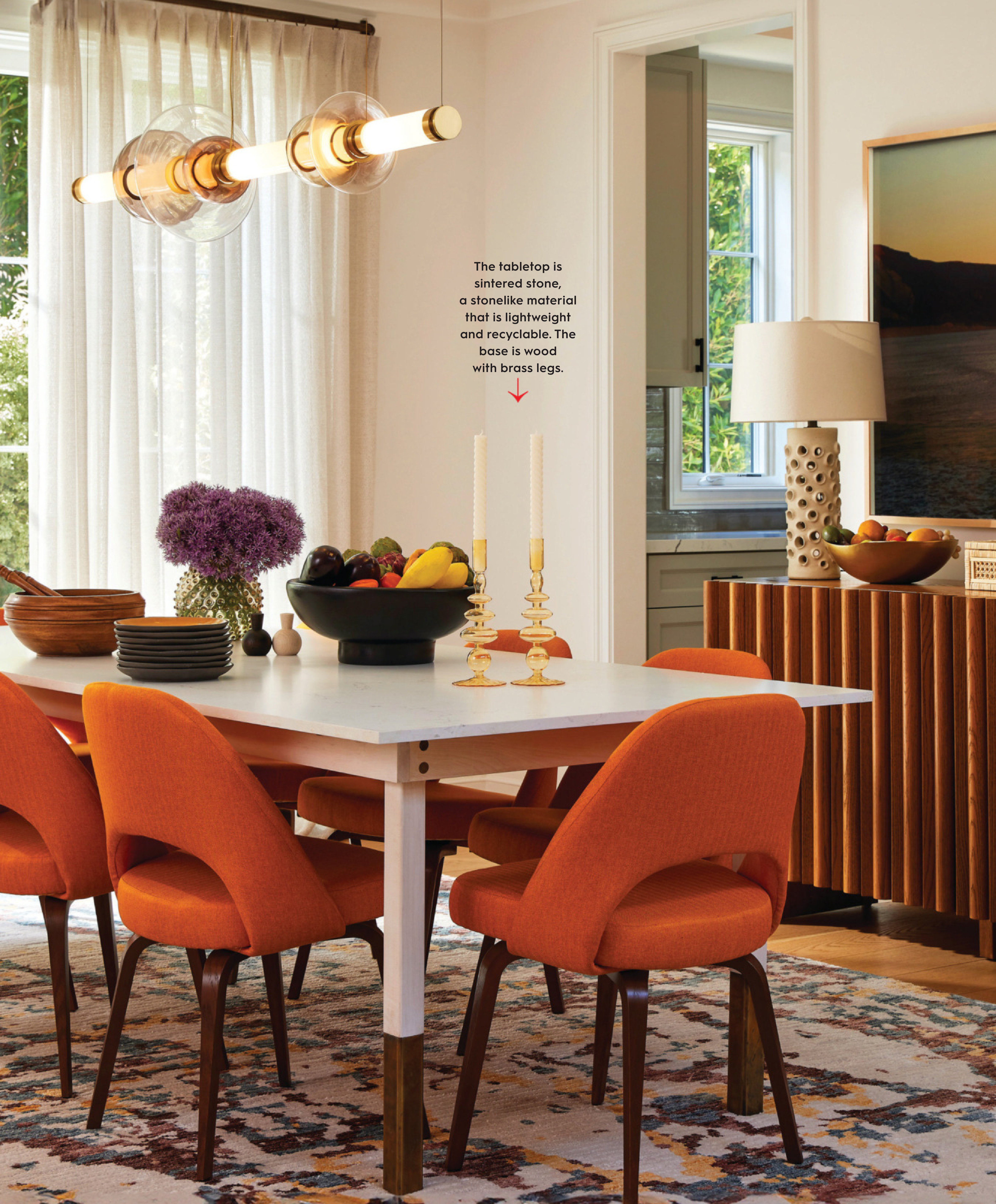
Perera utilized vegan paints to embolden furniture and walls with bright hues. "The house came alive with pink, yellow, orange,

●

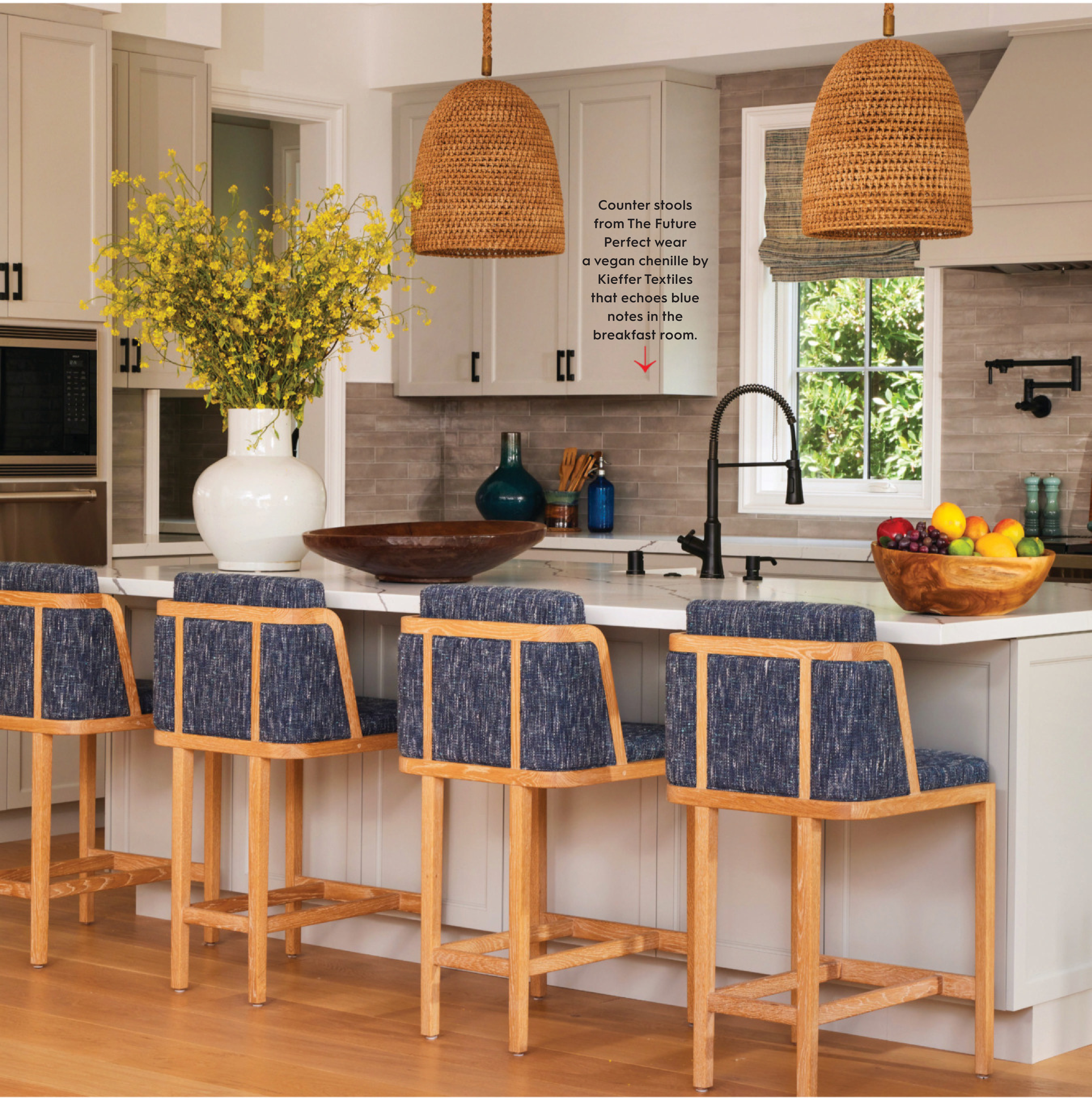
"My clients wanted clean lines and they wanted a lot of color," says Perera, who designed the family room's salmon-color sectional, *above,* to have cotton batting rather than wool.

●

Perera had the Design Within Reach chairs, *right,* upholstered in an orange polyester fabric (Sherlock Courge by Pierre Frey). "I love this colorful, understated, and sophisticated space," she says.



The tabletop is sintered stone, a stonelike material that is lightweight and recyclable. The base is wood with brass legs.



Counter stools from The Future Perfect wear a vegan chenille by Kieffer Textiles that echoes blue notes in the breakfast room.

green, and blue," she says. "I didn't want it to feel chaotic, so I tried to thread certain colors through each space for continuity."

The designer worked with showrooms to make custom furniture pieces that didn't use any animal products. She researched textiles whose colors were derived from vegetable dyes rather than synthetic ones. She sourced soy-based foam inserts and vegan linen drapes. "The list goes on and on," Perera says. "And beyond the vegan aspect of the home's design, we were also trying to honor the environment by reducing our carbon footprint and shopping locally. In every way and in every decision, we were thinking about the environment and animals."

Perera's greatest passion is educating people about environmentally friendly interior design. "I consider it my role to pass along all the things I've learned and to implement them in my work," she says. "There are so many more homes being built right now that are energy-efficient or eco-friendly, but not as many people are cognizant of what is inside the home and whether they promote people's health or harm it. I'm all about a healthy home. And as it turns out, what is good for the environment is usually good for people too."

Perera warmed up the kitchen, *left*, with lots of natural woven materials, including organic rattan light fixtures by Kathy Kuo and woven window shades.

Terra-cotta pendants in the breakfast nook, *above*, were handmade in Mexico and cast light through their cutouts.

Vegan Design Basics

Designer Kishani Perera follows these principles when choosing materials.

CRUELTY-FREE
Avoid products that may cause harm to an animal—no down, feathers, wool, fur, leather, suede, or silk.

NATURAL FIBERS
Some products that are vegan are also synthetic and toxic, off-gassing for weeks or months inside your home. Perera recommends only plant-based fibers for rugs. Check out *loomyhome.com* for their vegan options.

PAINTS
Use nontoxic, vegan paints and wallpaper adhesives. Avoid those with beeswax or casein, a milk product sometimes used in paint.

WOOD
Source sustainable wood from responsibly managed and well-protected forests.

LOCAL GOODS
Seek out as many things locally as possible to reduce your carbon footprint.

To avoid the chemicals and PVCs found in typical mattresses, Perera recommends organic options like Loom & Leaf by Saatva or Naturepedic.

Perera visually warmed up the bedroom, *left*, which has 10-foot ceilings, by adding lots of natural elements. She clad one wall in reclaimed wood, added natural woven shades on the windows, and layered a jute rug dyed with vegetable pigments beneath the bed.

Just off the front door is the couple's library, *right*. Perera designed the bookshelves with back panels that look like vintage wood. She added brass library sconces above the built-ins. "We enlivened the space with color, from dark carnation pink to topaz," Perera says.

"The office is lively and super fun but still cozy," Perera says. "To me, it feels like the inside of a candy store." She reinvented a sofa, *left*, from the couple's former home with orange Cowtan & Tout fabric, added multicolor drapes, and laid down a pink rug by Annie Selke. ■

by
MEGHAN SPLAWN
photos
CARSON DOWNING
food styling
KELSEY MOYLAN

Forget-Me-Nots

Good taste never goes out of style. We hopped in the recipe time machine to bring back five of the most delicious and beloved retro desserts from the BHG archives to sweeten all of your spring occasions.

Chocolate Chiffon Pie

This pie's filling has a rich, super-creamy texture, and the whole thing can be made almost entirely from pantry staples. First published in our April 1955 issue, the dessert had a TikTok revival last year too.

Finish the pie with a swoop of sweetened whipped cream and edible flowers.

Berry Floating Islands

Pillowy soft meringues swim in a dish of creamy custard in this customizable recipe—originally published in 1956—that makes the most of early-season berries. You can prepare the meringues and the custard up to a day ahead and assemble just before serving.

A favorite of our editors, this recipe has a long legacy at Better Homes & Gardens.

Hot Milk Sponge Cake with Broiled Macadamia-Coconut Topping

Hot milk cakes (aka boiled milk cakes) gained popularity in the 1930s and '40s for their ease and thrifty ingredient list. This version, a standout from one of our 1941 cookbooks, has an unbelievably tender crumb and a chewy, buttery topper that's simply irresistible.

Daffodil Cake

This tangy take on angel food cake is all flair, no fuss: Half the batter is brightened with lemon zest and egg yolks for a rich, citrusy swirl. A lemon buttercream drives home big citrus flavor.

Each slice is shot through with buttery yellow reminiscent of daffodils' yellow and white petals.

Lemon Torte

Lively, light, and citrus-bright, this recipe (from our March 1953 issue) could be considered the love child of a Pavlova and a lemon meringue pie. Also known as angel pie, the baked meringue "torte" is topped with a lemon curdlike filling lightened up with a bit of whipped cream. ■

● **FORGET-ME-NOTS**
pages 84–89

Chocolate Chiffon Pie

To melt chocolate, microwave in 30-second intervals until soft enough to stir smooth, 1 to 1½ minutes total.

HANDS ON 40 min.
TOTAL TIME 2 hr. 40 min.

1	**0.25-oz. envelope unflavored gelatin (2½ tsp.)**
1	**tsp. instant espresso coffee powder**
2	**oz. unsweetened chocolate, melted**
3	**egg yolks***
1	**cup sugar**
1	**tsp. vanilla**
3	**egg whites***
1	**Baked Pastry Shell**
	Sweetened Whipped Cream
	Fuchsia blossoms (optional)

1. In a small bowl sprinkle gelatin over ¼ cup *cold water.* Let stand 5 minutes.

2. In another small bowl stir together espresso powder and ½ cup *boiling water* until dissolved. Whisk in gelatin mixture and melted chocolate.

3. In a large bowl beat egg yolks with a mixer on medium until light and a pale lemon color, 2 to 3 minutes. Beat in ½ cup of the sugar. Add vanilla and ¼ tsp. *salt.* Gradually beat in chocolate mixture. Chill until partially set, about 15 minutes. Stir until smooth.

4. In a medium bowl beat egg whites with a mixer on medium until soft peaks form (tips curl). Gradually add the remaining ½ cup sugar, beating until stiff peaks form (tips stand straight).

5. Stir a small amount of the egg white mixture into the chocolate mixture to lighten. Fold remaining egg white mixture into chocolate mixture. Chill until partially set, about 10 minutes. Spoon into cooled Baked Pastry Shell. Cover and chill until set, 2 to 24 hours.

6. Top servings with Sweetened Whipped Cream and, if you like, fuchsia blossoms. Serves 8.

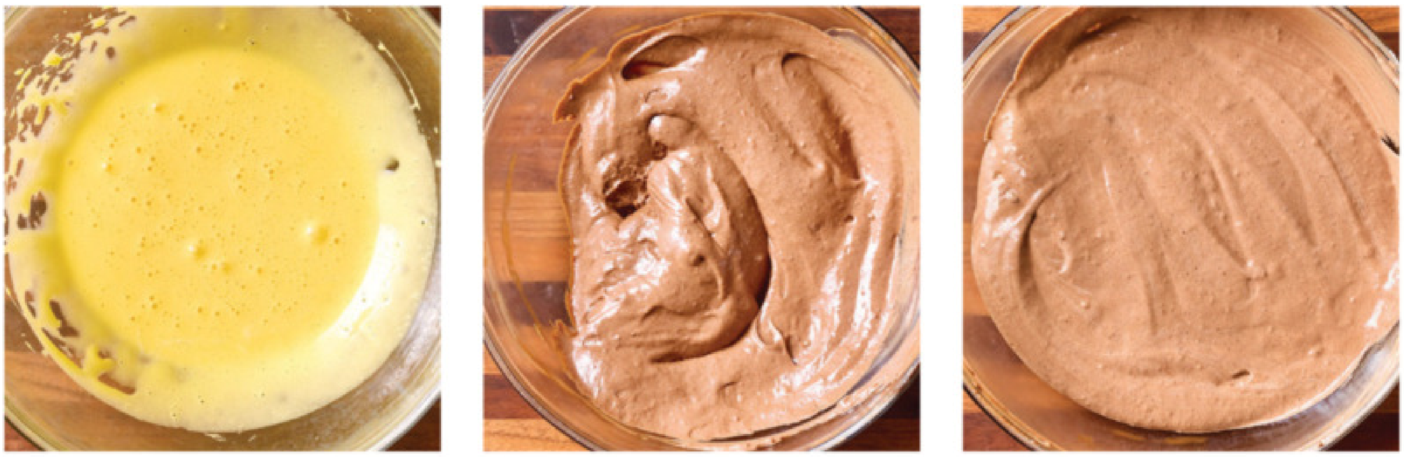
***TIP** We recommend using pasteurized eggs since this filling doesn't get cooked. If you can't find pasteurized in-shell eggs, you can make your own: Place whole eggs in a saucepan filled with water and fitted with a digital thermometer. Heat water to 140°F. Hold the temperature at 140°F (and no higher than 142°F) 3 minutes, reducing heat if necessary. Remove eggs from hot water and rinse under cold water. Store in the refrigerator until needed or use immediately.

BAKED PASTRY SHELL Preheat oven to 450°F. In a medium bowl stir together 1½ cups all-purpose flour and ½ tsp. salt. Using a pastry blender, cut in ¼ cup each shortening and cold butter, cut up, until pieces are pea size. Sprinkle 1 Tbsp. cold water over part of the flour mixture; toss with a fork. Push moistened pastry to side of bowl. Repeat moistening flour mixture, using 1 Tbsp. water at a time, until mixture begins to come together, using ¼ to ⅓ cup water total. Gather pastry into a ball, kneading gently just until it holds together. On a lightly floured surface use your hands to slightly flatten pastry. Roll pastry from center to edges into a 12-inch circle. Wrap pastry circle around the rolling pin. Unroll and ease pastry into a 9-inch pie plate without stretching it. Trim pastry to ½ inch beyond edge of pie plate. Fold under extra pastry even with the plate's edge; crimp edge as desired. Prick bottom and sides of pastry with a fork. Line pastry with a double thickness of foil. Bake 8 minutes. Remove foil. Bake until golden, 6 to 8 minutes more. Cool on a wire rack.

SWEETENED WHIPPED CREAM In a small bowl beat ½ cup heavy cream, 1 Tbsp. powdered sugar, and ½ tsp. vanilla with a mixer on medium until soft peaks form (tips curl).

PER SERVING *422 cal, 23 g fat (12 g sat fat), 102 mg chol, 296 mg sodium, 47 g carb, 2 g fiber, 27 g sugars, 7 g pro*

Chocolate Chiffon Pie



From the Test Kitchen

● **BEAT UNTIL YELLOW** Use a mixer to aerate egg yolks in Step 3 until they're pale yellow before adding sugar, vanilla, and salt. Sugar can weigh down the mixture and impede the protein structures in the yolks from whipping up into a stable, fluffy foam. ● **LIGHTEN UP** When it's time to combine the chilled chocolate mixture and the whipped egg whites, start by stirring about ¼ cup of the egg white mixture into the chocolate mixture to lighten it. This will make it easier to fold in the remaining egg white mixture without deflating the whipped structure. To keep deflation to a minimum, use a rubber spatula to gently lift the mixture from the bottom of the bowl to the top a few times.

PHOTOS: CARSON DOWNING

“IT’S SPRING AND CUSTARD TIME—THE SEASON FOR VELVETY CUSTARD SAUCE. FLOATING ISLANDS ADD A TOUCH OF OLD-FASHIONED GLAMOR AT MEALTIME.”—*Better Homes & Gardens,* April 1954 issue

Berry Floating Islands

HANDS ON 40 min.
TOTAL TIME 2 hr. 40 min.

2 egg whites
1 Tbsp. plus ¼ tsp. vanilla
½ cup sugar
3 cups milk, plus more as needed
3 whole eggs
2 egg yolks
3 cups blackberries and/or blueberries
Fresh mint sprigs (optional)

1. For meringues, in a small bowl beat egg whites, ¼ tsp. vanilla, and a dash *salt* with a mixer on medium until soft peaks form (tips curl). Gradually add ¼ cup of the sugar, beating until stiff peaks form (tips stand straight).

2. In a large skillet bring milk to simmering (about 180°F) over medium. Gently stir milk to prevent scorching (do not allow milk to boil). Using two serving spoons, drop egg white mixture in ⅓- to ½-cup portions into simmering milk to make four to six meringues. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cook, uncovered, until meringues are 165°F to 170°F, 5 to 7 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer meringues to a paper towel-lined tray. (Reserve milk.) After 10 minutes, transfer meringues to a clean plate and loosely cover with plastic wrap; chill at least 2 hours or up to 24 hours. (Do not store meringues on the paper towel-lined tray.)

3. Meanwhile, for custard, transfer reserved milk to a 4-cup measuring cup. Let cool 15 minutes. If necessary, add enough milk to equal 3 cups.

4. Set a stainless-steel bowl in a large bowl of ice water. In a heavy medium saucepan whisk together cooled milk, whole eggs, egg yolks, ¼ tsp. salt, and the remaining ¼ cup sugar. Cook and stir constantly over medium just until sauce coats the back of a spoon and mixture is 180°F, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in the remaining 1 Tbsp. vanilla. Quickly cool custard by transferring to the stainless-steel bowl; stir constantly 4 to 5 minutes. Remove bowl from ice bath. Cover surface of custard with plastic wrap. Chill at least 2 hours or up to 24 hours before serving.

5. To serve, spoon custard into shallow bowls. Top with meringues, berries, and mint (if using). Serve immediately. Serves 4 to 6.

PER SERVING *335 cal, 10 g fat (4 g sat fat), 246 mg chol, 338 mg sodium, 46 g carb, 5 g fiber, 40 g sugars, 16 g pro*

Hot Milk Sponge Cake with Broiled Macadamia-Coconut Topping

HANDS ON 20 min.
TOTAL TIME 1 hr.

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking powder
2 eggs, at room temperature
½ tsp. vanilla
1 cup sugar
½ cup milk
2 Tbsp. butter
Macadamia-Coconut Topping
Honey and/or edible flowers (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a 9-inch round or square baking pan; line pan with parchment paper. In a small bowl stir together flour and baking powder.

2. In a large bowl beat eggs and vanilla with a mixer on high until thick and a pale lemon color, 4 to 5 minutes. Gradually add sugar, beating mixture on medium until sugar is almost dissolved, about 5 minutes. Gradually add flour mixture to egg mixture, beating on low to medium just until combined.

Hot Milk Sponge Cake with Broiled Macadamia-Coconut Topping

3. In a small saucepan heat milk and butter over low until butter melts. Add milk mixture to egg mixture, stirring just until combined. Pour batter into prepared pan.

4. Bake until top of cake springs back when lightly touched, 25 to 30 minutes. Cool in pan 10 minutes. Carefully remove cake from pan; remove and discard parchment. Place cake on a baking sheet. Spread Macadamia-Coconut Topping on top of warm cake. Broil 4 to 5 inches from heat until lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Let cool. If you like, drizzle with honey and/or top with edible flowers. Serves 9.

MACADAMIA-COCONUT TOPPING In a medium bowl stir together 1 cup flaked coconut; ½ cup packed brown sugar; ½ cup macadamia nuts and/or slivered almonds, chopped; ¼ cup butter, softened; and 2 Tbsp. milk.

PER SERVING *368 cal, 17 g fat (9 g sat fat), 63 mg chol, 192 mg sodium, 51 g carb, 2 g fiber, 39 g sugars, 4 g pro*

Daffodil Cake

The number of eggs you'll need for 1½ cups egg whites will depend on their size. Or use liquid egg whites in a carton.
HANDS ON 30 min.
TOTAL TIME 2 hr. 10 min.

1½ cups egg whites (9 to 11)
1 cup sifted cake flour or sifted all-purpose flour
1½ cups sugar
1 Tbsp. vanilla
1½ tsp. cream of tartar
6 egg yolks
1 Tbsp. lemon zest
Tangy Lemon Frosting
Nasturtium blossoms (optional)

1. Place egg whites in an extra-large bowl. Let stand at room temperature 30 minutes. Meanwhile, sift together flour and ¾ cup of the sugar. Place oven rack at lowest position. Preheat oven to 350°F.

2. Add vanilla, cream of tartar, and ¼ tsp. *salt* to egg whites. Beat with a mixer on medium to high until soft peaks form (tips curl). Gradually add the remaining ¾ cup sugar, beating until stiff peaks form (tips stand straight). Sift one-fourth of the flour mixture over beaten egg whites; fold in gently. Repeat, adding and gently folding in remaining flour mixture one-fourth at a time. Transfer half of the batter to another bowl.

3. In a small bowl beat egg yolks with a mixer on high until thick and a pale lemon color, 4 to 5 minutes. Fold in lemon zest. Gently fold egg yolk mixture into one half of divided batter. Alternately spoon yellow (egg yolk) batter and the remaining plain batter into an ungreased 10-inch tube pan. Lightly swirl a metal spatula or butter knife through batters to marble.

4. Bake until top of cake springs back when lightly touched, 40 to 45 minutes. Immediately invert cake in pan; cool completely, about 1 hour. Loosen sides of cake; remove pan. Place cake upside down on a serving plate; frost with Tangy Lemon Frosting. If you like, top with nasturtium blossoms and/or additional lemon zest. Serves 12.

Tubular

Also called an angel food cake pan, tube pans have a hollow center tube that ensures even baking; most have a removable bottom.

Daffodil Cake

TANGY LEMON FROSTING Beat ½ cup butter with a mixer on low to medium until softened. Beat in 5½ cups sifted powdered sugar, ½ tsp. lemon zest, and ⅓ cup fresh lemon juice, adding additional lemon juice as needed to make spreading consistency.

PER SERVING *471 cal, 10 g fat (6 g sat fat), 113 mg chol, 164 mg sodium, 90 g carb, 79 g sugars, 6 g pro*

Lemon Torte

HANDS ON 30 min.
TOTAL TIME 2 hr. 15 min.

3 egg whites
½ tsp. white vinegar
1⅔ cups plus 2 Tbsp. sugar
4 egg yolks
2 tsp. lemon zest
⅓ cup fresh lemon juice
1 cup heavy cream
Candied Lemon Slices *(opposite)* and/or lavender blossoms (optional)

1. For meringue shell, preheat oven to 300°F. On a sheet of parchment paper, trace around a 9-inch round cake pan. Turn paper over so marking is on the bottom and place on a baking sheet.

PHOTOS: (TUBE PAN) ANDY LYONS, (ALL OTHERS) CARSON DOWNING

Lemon Torte

2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment beat egg whites, vinegar, and ⅛ tsp. *salt* until soft peaks form (tips curl). Gradually add 1 cup of the sugar, 2 Tbsp. at a time, beating well after each addition. Continue beating until sugar is dissolved and mixture is very stiff, 5 to 7 minutes. Spread meringue inside the parchment paper circle. Use the back of a spoon to mound the edges. Bake until outside of shell is dry, about 45 minutes. Cool completely.

3. For filling, in a medium bowl beat egg yolks with a mixer on high until thick and a pale lemon color, 4 to 5 minutes. Gradually beat in ⅔ cup of the sugar. Stir in lemon zest and juice. Transfer mixture to a small saucepan. Cook over medium-low, stirring constantly, until thick and temperature reaches 195°F, 10 to 12 minutes. Transfer filling to a bowl. Cover surface with plastic wrap. Chill until cold, at least 1 hour or up to 3 days.

4. In a large bowl beat heavy cream with a mixer on medium until soft peaks form (tips curl), gradually adding the remaining 2 Tbsp. sugar. Fold half of the whipped cream into chilled lemon filling. Spoon into meringue shell. Serve torte with the remaining whipped cream. If you like, garnish torte with Candied Lemon Slices and/or lavender blossoms. Serves 8.

PER SERVING *313 cal, 13 g fat (8 g sat fat), 126 mg chol, 70 mg sodium, 47 g carb, 46 g sugars, 4 g pro*

CANDIED LEMON SLICES

In a large skillet combine ¾ cup sugar and ¼ cup water; bring to boiling, stirring to dissolve sugar. Add 2 thinly sliced lemons. Simmer gently, uncovered, until just softened, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool. Makes about 1 cup.

● **FOR THE LOVE OF RANCH**
pages 32–37

Dressed-Up Ranch Wedge Salad

Follow our lead with homemade dressing and leveled-up toppers, or keep the steak house-inspired salad classic with bacon, tomatoes, and chives.

START TO FINISH 20 min.

1 head iceberg lettuce
1¼ cups Buttermilk Ranch Dressing *(below right)* or purchased ranch dressing
6 slices (4 oz.) salami, cut into slivers and crisp-cooked
2 hard-boiled eggs, finely grated
24 pickled sweety drop peppers (such as DeLallo Pepper Drops)
4 oz. ricotta salata cheese, shredded or crumbled (1 cup)
¼ tsp. cracked black pepper

1. Trim stem from lettuce, leaving core intact. Cut lettuce into quarters; place quarters on serving plates. Store in the refrigerator until almost ready to serve. Fifteen minutes before serving, place wedges on plates in the freezer to get extra cold.

2. Spoon 3 Tbsp. Buttermilk Ranch Dressing over each wedge. Top wedges with salami, eggs, sweety drop peppers, ricotta salata, and black pepper. Serve the remaining dressing alongside salads. Makes 4 salads.

PER SALAD *456 cal, 39 g fat (12 g sat fat), 163 mg chol, 1,174 mg sodium, 11 g carb, 2 g fiber, 8 g sugars, 17 g pro*

SOUTHWEST WEDGE SALAD Prepare wedges as directed in Step 1. In a small food processor pulse Buttermilk Ranch Dressing with 2 Tbsp. chopped chipotle peppers in adobo sauce. Top wedges as directed with chipotle ranch dressing. Omit salami, eggs, sweety drop peppers, ricotta salata, and black pepper. Top wedges with crisp-cooked smoked Spanish-style chorizo, shredded Mexican-style four-cheese blend, fresh avocado chunks, halved cherry tomatoes, and sliced green onions.

PER SERVING *536 cal, 46 g fat (13 g sat fat), 65 mg chol, 880 mg sodium, 15 g carb, 5 g fiber, 7 g sugars, 17 g pro*

Sweety Drops

Teeny, teardrop-shape sweety drop peppers have a flavor that's sweet and tangy—almost like an amped-up version of bell peppers' flavor.

Buttermilk Ranch Dressing

HANDS ON 10 min.
TOTAL TIME 40 min.

¾ cup buttermilk
½ cup mayonnaise
1 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley
1 garlic clove, minced
¼ tsp. onion powder
¼ tsp. dry mustard

In a bowl stir together buttermilk, mayonnaise, parsley, garlic, onion powder, dry mustard, ¼ tsp. *black pepper*, and ⅛ to ¼ tsp. *salt*. If necessary, stir in additional buttermilk to reach desired consistency. Cover and chill at least 30 minutes or up to 1 week. Stir before using. Makes 1¼ cups.

PEPPERCORN-BUTTERMILK DRESSING Prepare as directed, except use ½ tsp. cracked black pepper in place of the ground black pepper.

PER 1 TBSP. *42 cal, 4 g fat (1 g sat fat), 3 mg chol, 67 mg sodium, 1 g carb*

BACON-BUTTERMILK DRESSING

Prepare as directed, except cook 4 slices bacon until crisp; drain and crumble, reserving 1 Tbsp. bacon drippings. Stir crumbled bacon and bacon drippings into dressing just before serving. Makes about 1⅓ cups.

PER 1 TBSP. *53 cal, 5 g fat (1 g sat fat), 5 mg chol, 92 mg sodium, 1 g carb, 1 g pro*

Ranch Seasoning Mix

The steak house that made ranch dressing famous started shipping its dried mix in the early '60s. Make your own to use in the following recipes, as well as in dips, dressing, and meat or fish breading.

START TO FINISH 10 min.

1 cup dried buttermilk
1 Tbsp. dried parsley, crushed
1 Tbsp. dried cilantro, crushed
2 tsp. dried chives, crushed
2 tsp. dried dill
1 tsp. garlic powder
½ tsp. onion powder

In a medium bowl whisk together all ingredients, plus 1 tsp. each *salt* and *black pepper*. Transfer to an airtight container. Store at room temperature up to 6 months. Makes 1¼ cups.

PER 1 TSP. *7 cal, 1 mg chol, 48 mg sodium, 1 g carb, 1 g sugars, 1 g pro*

Smashed Ranch Broccoli

HANDS ON 15 min.
TOTAL TIME 40 min.

1½ lb. fresh broccoli, cut into florets (about 8 cups)
8 oz. Parmesan cheese, finely shredded (2 cups)
¼ cup Ranch Seasoning Mix *(far left)* or one 1-oz. pkg. dry ranch dressing mix
¾ cup Buttermilk Ranch Dressing *(page 93)* or purchased ranch dressing
2 tsp. sriracha sauce (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Place broccoli in a steamer basket set in a large saucepan. Add water to just below the basket. Bring to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and steam until just fork tender, 5 to 7 minutes.

2. Spread Parmesan in an even layer on the prepared baking sheet. Arrange broccoli florets in a single layer over cheese, leaving about an inch between pieces. Using the bottom of a glass, smash each broccoli floret until flattened. Sprinkle broccoli and cheese with Ranch Seasoning Mix; drizzle with 3 Tbsp. *olive oil.*

3. Bake until golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes. Cool slightly.

4. In a small bowl stir together Buttermilk Ranch Dressing and sriracha sauce (if using). Break broccoli mixture into pieces. Drizzle or serve with dressing. Makes 6 servings.

PER SERVING *347 cal, 26 g fat (9 g sat fat), 35 mg chol, 902 mg sodium, 10 g carb, 3 g fiber, 5 g sugars, 20 g pro*

Smashed Ranch Broccoli

DIY Ranch Dip

In a small bowl whisk together 1 cup mayonnaise, 1 cup sour cream, and 3 Tbsp. Ranch Seasoning Mix *(below)*. Cover and chill 1 hour before serving. Refrigerate in an airtight container up to 1 week. Makes 2 cups.

Ranch Seasoning Mix

Ranch-Seasoned Chicken Katsu Sandwiches

If you don't want to pan-fry the cutlets, you can bake or air-fry them instead.

START TO FINISH 30 min.

2 8-oz. skinless, boneless chicken breasts, halved horizontally
¼ cup plus 2 Tbsp. Ranch Seasoning Mix *(far left)* or purchased dry ranch dressing mix
¼ cup all-purpose flour
1 egg
1 cup panko
4 sesame seed hamburger

PHOTOS: CARSON DOWNING

Ranch-Seasoned Chicken Katsu Sandwich

buns, ranch-toasted*
Toppers: iceberg lettuce leaves, pickle slices, tomato slices, and Buttermilk Ranch Dressing *(page 93)* or purchased ranch dressing

1. Using the flat side of a meat mallet, lightly flatten chicken pieces between two pieces of plastic wrap to an even thickness (slightly less than ½ inch thick). Season chicken pieces with ½ tsp. *salt.*

2. In a shallow dish stir together ¼ cup of the Ranch Seasoning Mix and the flour. In another shallow dish whisk together egg and 2 Tbsp. *water.* In a third shallow dish stir together panko and the remaining 2 Tbsp. Ranch Seasoning Mix.

3. Dredge chicken pieces in flour mixture to coat, then dip in egg mixture. Coat with panko mixture, pressing to adhere panko.

4. In a large skillet heat 2 Tbsp. *olive oil* over medium. Cook two of the chicken pieces at a time in hot oil, turning once, until done (165°F), 10 to 12 minutes. If you like, keep chicken warm in a 200°F oven on a wire rack set in a shallow baking pan. Repeat with additional 2 Tbsp. olive oil and the two remaining chicken pieces.

5. Serve chicken in buns with toppers and Buttermilk Ranch Dressing. Makes 4 sandwiches.

***TIP** To ranch-toast buns, brush cut sides of buns with homemade or purchased ranch dressing. Heat a large skillet over medium. Add buns, cut sides down. Cook until toasted, 2 to 3 minutes.

PER SANDWICH *634 cal, 27 g fat (4 g sat fat), 139 mg chol, 1,076 mg sodium, 55 g carb, 5 g fiber, 9 g sugars, 43 g pro*

TO BAKE CHICKEN Preheat oven to 450°F. Place a wire rack in a shallow baking pan. Prepare chicken as directed through Step 3. Place chicken pieces on rack in pan. Bake until golden brown and chicken is done (165°F), 15 minutes.

TO AIR-FRY CHICKEN
Preheat air fryer to 400°F. Prepare chicken as directed through Step 3. Coat one side of chicken pieces with olive oil cooking spray. Add chicken to basket, sprayed side up; cook 4 minutes. Turn chicken pieces, coat with additional cooking spray, and cook until golden brown and chicken is done (165°F), 4 to 5 minutes more.

Chicken-Bacon-Ranch Casserole with Ranch Croutons

HANDS ON 15 min.
TOTAL TIME 40 min.

8 oz. dried gemelli or penne pasta
1¼ cups Buttermilk Ranch Dressing *(page 93)* or purchased ranch dressing
½ cup sour cream or plain Greek yogurt
½ cup buttermilk
3 cups chopped cooked chicken (12 oz.)
1½ cups shredded white cheddar cheese or Swiss cheese (6 oz.)
12 oz. bacon, crisp-cooked and chopped, or 12 slices ready-to-eat cooked bacon, chopped (¾ cup)
1 10-oz. pkg. frozen chopped spinach, thawed and well-drained
½ cup chopped pickled sweet cherry peppers or roasted red bell peppers
3 slices sourdough or French bread, cubed (3½ cups)
2 Tbsp. Ranch Seasoning Mix *(opposite)* or purchased dry ranch dressing mix
2 Tbsp. butter, melted

1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Grease a 3-qt. rectangular baking dish. Cook pasta according to package directions; drain.

2. In a large bowl stir together Buttermilk Ranch Dressing, sour cream, and buttermilk. Stir in cooked pasta, chicken, cheese, ½ cup of the bacon, the spinach, and peppers. Transfer mixture to the prepared baking dish. Bake, uncovered, 15 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, in a medium bowl toss together bread cubes, Ranch Seasoning Mix, and melted butter.

4. After casserole has baked 15 minutes, spread bread cubes over top and sprinkle with the remaining ¼ cup bacon. Bake, uncovered, until top is golden and mixture is bubbly, 10 to 15 minutes. If you like, drizzle with additional ranch dressing. Serves 8.

PER SERVING *588 cal, 33 g fat (12 g sat fat), 100 mg chol, 863 mg sodium, 42 g carb, 4 g fiber, 6 g sugars, 33 g pro*

Chicken-Bacon-Ranch Casserole with Ranch Croutons

Ranch Gin & Tonic

Ranch Gin & Tonic

Milk washing strips a spirit of its bitter, astringent tannins for a softer, smoother flavor.

START TO FINISH 10 min.

Ice cubes
4 oz. (½ cup) tonic water, chilled
2 oz. (¼ cup) Milk-Washed Gin
1 lemon slice and/or twist
1 thin slice shallot
1 thin slice garlic
1 to 2 sprigs fresh dill and/or flat-leaf parsley
Mustard seeds and/or whole black peppercorns
Cucumber slice and/or small celery stalk with greens

Fill a large glass with ice. Add tonic and Milk-Washed Gin. Garnish with lemon, shallot, garlic, herbs, spices, and cucumber. Stir gently. Serves 1.

MILK-WASHED GIN In a small saucepan bring 1 cup whole milk just to a simmer. Stir in ¼ cup lemon juice; remove from heat. Let stand 5 minutes to allow curds to form and separate. Stir in 1 cup dry gin. Strain mixture through a fine-mesh sieve; discard curds. Strain again through a coffee filter. Chill at least 1 hour before using. Store in the refrigerator up to 2 months.

PER SERVING *160 cal, 1 g fat (1 g sat fat), 4 mg chol, 34 mg sodium, 15 g carb, 13 g sugars, 1 g pro* ■

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Health Nut

Project CLOSET

For years my closet was, well, less than organized. But the thought of actually going through it all was so overwhelming that I kept putting it off—until I met an organizer whose approach inspired me to face the hangers.

by AMY BRIGHTFIELD *illustration* EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

Clothes tell the stories of our lives. I had over two decades of dresses, pants, jeans, sweaters, and blouses in my closet, and each piece held a memory: a black shift dress that was my go-to for cocktail parties and, when paired with a blazer, job interviews in my 20s. A double-breasted, ankle-length camel coat from one of my annual fall shopping excursions with Grandma Lenora.

I don't like goodbyes, and I wasn't good at parting with clothes. What if that style comes back? (It happens!) And that was a gift from Grandma L; giving it away would feel like letting go of that memory. Over the years, my closet got more and more stuffed—so much so that getting dressed would sometimes turn into a take-everything-out-and-toss-it-on-the-bed-to-find-that-V-neck-sweater ordeal. But every time my husband would say, "Amy, let's clean out," I would get a knot in my stomach. I wasn't sure how to turn this into a neat, color-coordinated space. Then I met Rachel Rosenthal, an organizing expert who felt my pain and had a plan (and lots of empathy and insight). Here's how she helped me conquer the clutter.

- **Be compassionate with yourself** Giving things away and getting organized have an emotional component that can be a

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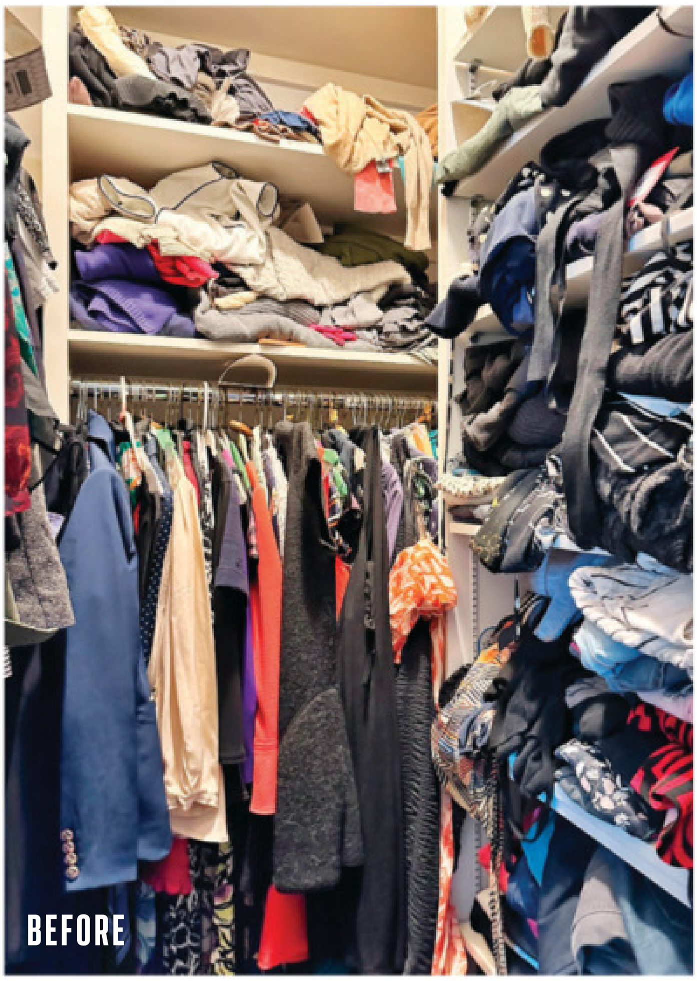

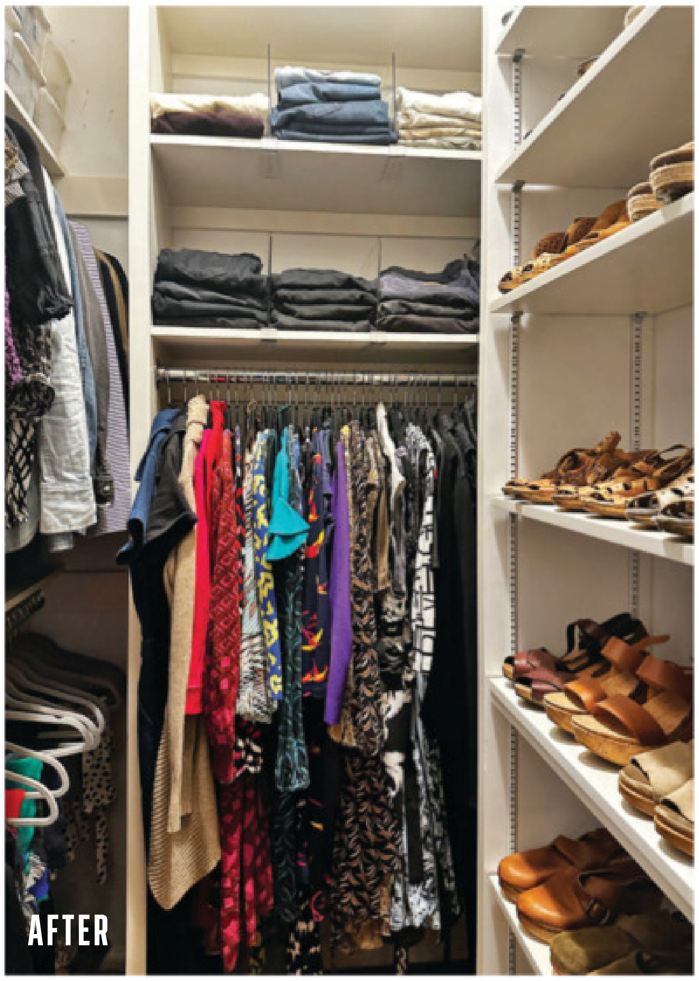

Break It Down

You can split closet organization into sessions and decide what to accomplish in each. Are you choosing what to keep, donate, or toss? Are you grouping like items together?

stumbling block. And when a project feels too overwhelming to tackle, it can seem like you've failed. "It's hard not to tie our sense of success and worth to how 'together' our spaces appear," Rosenthal says. "Getting organized is an ongoing tool to make things easier. Give yourself grace as you navigate the process; how organized you are isn't a reflection of your value or capabilities."

Ready, Set, Donate!

After eight hours with organizer Rachel Rosenthal, *above* on the right, I had 20(!) bags of unneeded clothes. I gave them to Dress for Success, which helps women entering the workforce, and a local Goodwill.

● **Sort smart** As you're going through your clothes, ask: When was the last time I wore this? Was it within the past year? If not, why? Do I love this piece? Do I feel good wearing it? For me, this was the cornerstone of the process since I had two decades of clothing to sort. Why was I holding on to all of it? As Rosenthal held up each skirt or dress, I often thought, *Wow, that's baggy,* and I realized how my body image had changed over the years. So many of my old clothes hid my figure, while wrap dresses and skinny jeans that embrace my curves are now my staples.

● **Think about your space and habits**
"True organization isn't about everything being color-coordinated," Rosenthal says. (Whew.) "It's about creating systems that work for you." My closet is narrow and has many high shelves that are hard for 5' 1" me to reach. Shoes covered the floor, so I couldn't stand inside the space and really see what I had. Solution: Everyday shoes were moved to the reachable shelves, and items that I wore infrequently were placed in bins on high shelves.

● **Put clothes back with purpose**
Rosenthal helped me realize there's no one-size-fits-all way to arrange your clothes. The key to a system that works is thinking about your routines and the way you put together outfits. The clothes you wear most often should be the easiest to access. We hung dresses, blouses, and jumpsuits front and center; jeans and pants went from hanging to folded on shelves with dividers so the entire pile wouldn't come cascading down when I took out one. This created room to hang belts and zip-up jackets, which I wear every day but were crammed in drawers. That simple switch probably saves me 10 minutes of searching—and stressing—daily.

I'm happy to report that my closet still looks like the "after" photo. Did I get rid of everything I haven't worn in the past year? No—and that's OK. Sentimental reasons can be enough to keep something. That camel coat from Grandma L is tucked into a garment bag out of the way until I want to wear it or just put it on to remember her. ■

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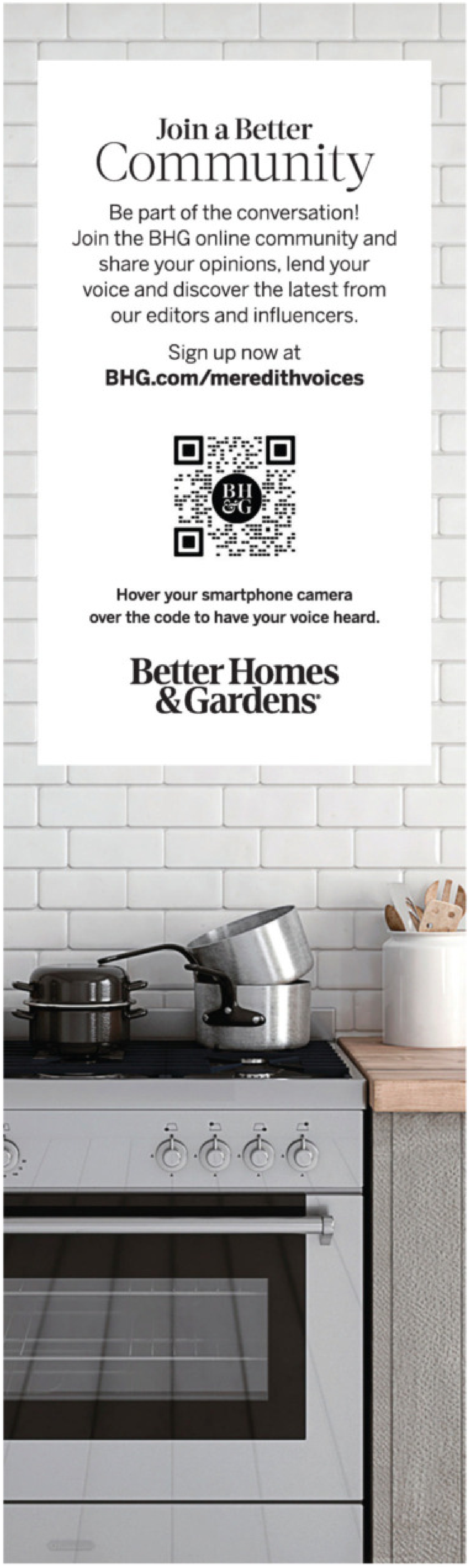

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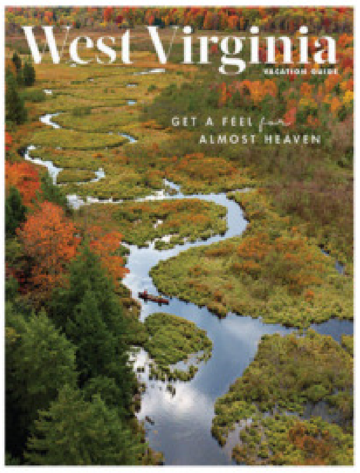

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In the Know

News and notes to boost your well-being

Experts recommend a breakfast that includes a mix of whole grains, protein, and produce, such as avocado toast with an egg on whole grain bread or oatmeal with berries and nuts.

Eating 20% to 30% of your daily calories as a hearty, healthy breakfast can protect your heart.

A new study in *The Journal of Nutrition, Health & Aging* found that those who did so had lower BMIs and triglycerides and higher HDL (good) cholesterol compared to those who didn't eat breakfast.

35 PERCENT of contact lens wearers buy their lenses online, while 14% of glasses are purchased via the internet, says a recent survey.

Many people use the online screening to update their prescriptions, but experts warn not to skip the in-person annual or biannual exam. Eye doctors can identify more than 270 diseases, such as hypertension and diabetes.

APRIL IS ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH. HOW OFTEN DO YOU DRINK?

A recent study in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that heavy drinking went up by 20 percent during the pandemic and hasn't gone down. Heavy drinking is defined as 15 drinks a week (or five or more in a day) for men and eight drinks weekly (or four or more in a day) for women. Take the temperature on your drinking habits by tracking your beverages using an app such as Less or Sunnyside.

Eating dark chocolate may reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes by 21%.

A new Harvard study found that people who ate five servings of dark chocolate each week reduced their risk of diabetes. Experts say that the antioxidants in dark chocolate may protect against the disease. But the same effect wasn't the case for milk chocolate, which was associated with weight gain.

1 in 3 Americans procrastinate doing their taxes.

Tax day is April 15, so it's time to get started! If you owe money and file after April 15, you may have to pay a penalty—even if you file an extension.

With roughly 160 calories per ounce, dark chocolate is still high in calories, so enjoy in moderation.

What's the deal with... *MOUTH TAPING?*

You may have heard of this trend in which people use an adhesive or medical tape to seal their mouths shut at bedtime. This forces you to breathe through your nose, which supposedly lessens snoring and dry mouth and prevents cavities. Check in with your doctor before doing this; experts say more research is needed on whether it's beneficial, and it can be risky for some, including those with breathing issues, sleep apnea, or GERD.

BY: SHARON LIAO; PHOTOS: (TOAST) CLAUDIA TOTIR/GETTY IMAGES, (CHOCOLATE) MALERAPASO/GETTY IMAGES

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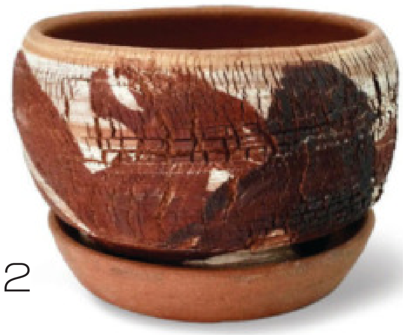
Her go-to garden gloves are sturdy and adorned with oak leaves, a nod to her last name, $33: coronatools.com/burgon-and-ball

> “Every time you encounter a plant—in the park, in your apartment, in the cracks of the sidewalk—it’s a chance to get curious about nature.”
>
> —SUMMER RAYNE OAKES

modern sprout

She likes the comfortable grip of these garden shears, $20: modern sprout.com



Summer Rayne Oakes

The aptly named horticulture expert shares her favorite plants and tools for creating a thriving indoor garden in any space.

With her popular YouTube channel and book, *How to Make a Plant Love You,* Summer Rayne Oakes became famous for her houseplant expertise. Recently, the trained environmental scientist has taken her love of plants outdoors, leading botanical tours abroad and gardening at her new home in Upstate New York. But she still believes in the power of the simple houseplant. “Observing and caring for houseplants is good for your mental health,” she says. “It’s like a moving meditation.”

FOOLPROOF PLANTS

For someone new to indoor plants, Summer Rayne has three top picks: “The black variety of the ZZ plant (4) can handle low light just like the regular one but has cool dark leaves.” For structure she loves aloes, which come in spiky and sculptural forms. And for a climber she likes silver dollar plants: “They grow like gangbusters in windows.”

THE ART OF DISPLAY

Summer Rayne’s aesthetic leans eclectic. At her Brooklyn apartment (5), some plants climb trellises, others are under cloches (1), and many live in handmade pots. “I love a wabi-sabi look,” she says. Work by New York potter Gary Bercow (2), who has a shop on Etsy, is a favorite; she also encourages people to seek out their own local makers.

LOW-LIGHT RX

The most common houseplant mistake? “Divorcing a plant from the light it needs,” Summer Rayne says. To cast a lot of light over a dark corner, she suggests pendant grow-lights (3) from Soltech, which also sells woven shades to warm up the fixture’s look *(soltech.com).* ■

by MIRANDA CROWELL

PHOTOS: (CLOCHE) MICHAEL PARTENIO, (ZZ PLANT) STEPHANIE FREY/SHUTTERSTOCK, (PORTRAIT) JOEYL.COM, (BOOKCASE) @HOMESTEADBROOKLYN

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